



SHANKARA'S  
CREST-JEWEL  
OF DISCRIMINATION

SHANKARA'S  
*Crest-Jewel*  
*of Discrimination*

(Viveka-Chudamani)

Translated,  
with an Introduction to  
Shankara's Philosophy



by  
SWAMI PRABHAVANANDA  
and  
CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD

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## *Contents*

	PAGE
I. SHANKARA	1
II. INTRODUCTION TO SHANKARA'S PHILOSOPHY	9
III. CREST-JEWEL OF DISCRIMINATION (Viveka-Chudamani)	39

**SHANKARA'S  
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OF DISCRIMINATION**

## *Shankara*

BEAUTIFUL and fantastic clouds of legend surround the austere, charming, boyish figure of Shankara—saint, philosopher and poet. But, historically speaking, we know very little about the circumstances of his life.

He was born in or around the year 686 A.D. of Brahmin parents at Kaladi, a small village of Western Malabar, in southern India. By the age of ten, he was already an academic prodigy. Not only had he read and memorized all the scriptures but he had written commentaries on many of them, and had held discussions with famous scholars who came to him from every part of the country.

Yet the boy was dissatisfied. At a time when most children are only beginning to study he was already disgusted by the emptiness of book-knowledge. He saw that his teachers did not practice the lofty truths they preached. Indeed the whole society in which he lived was materialistic and pleasure seeking. India was passing through a period of spiritual decadence. Shankara, burning with youthful zeal, resolved to make his own life

an example which would lead men back to the paths of truth.

At this period, his father died. The boy puzzled over the riddle of life and death, and determined to solve it. He would renounce everything in his search for the meaning of existence. It was then that he wrote the poem called *Moha Mudgaram*—“The Shattering of Illusion.” Here is a more or less literal translation:

Who is thy wife? Who is thy son?  
The ways of this world are strange indeed.  
Whose art thou? Whence art thou come?  
Vast is thy ignorance, my beloved.  
Therefore ponder these things and worship the Lord.

Behold the folly of Man:  
In childhood busy with his toys,  
In youth bewitched by love,  
In age bowed down with cares—  
And always unmindful of the Lord!  
The hours fly, the seasons roll, life ebbs,  
But the breeze of hope blows continually in his heart.

Birth brings death, death brings rebirth:  
This evil needs no proof.  
Where then, O Man, is thy happiness?

This life trembles in the balance  
Like water on a lotus-leaf—  
And yet the sage can show us, in an instant,  
How to bridge this sea of change.

When the body is wrinkled, when the hair turns  
grey,  
When the gums are toothless, and the old man's  
staff  
Shakes like a reed beneath his weight,  
The cup of his desire is still full.

Thy son may bring thee suffering,  
Thy wealth is no assurance of heaven;  
Therefore be not vain of thy wealth,  
Or of thy family, or of thy youth—  
All are fleeting, all must change.  
Know this and be free.  
Enter the joy of the Lord.

Seek neither peace nor strife  
With kith or kin, with friend or foe.  
O beloved, if thou wouldest attain freedom,  
Be equal unto all.

Shankara now persuaded his mother to let him take the monastic vow, promising that he would return to visit her before she died. Then, having

made arrangements for her needs, he set out in search of a teacher.

On the banks of the river Narmada, he met Gaudapada, a famous philosopher and seer, who had attained knowledge of the Reality. Shankara asked the old man for initiation, but Gaudapada refused. He had made a vow to remain absorbed in union with Brahman. However, he sent the boy to his foremost disciple, Govindapada. Govindapada initiated him and instructed him in meditation and the whole process of Yoga. Within a very short time, Shankara achieved complete mystical realization, and himself went out to teach.

One morning, when he was on his way to bathe in the Ganges he met a *Chandala*, a member of the lowest caste, the untouchables. The man had four dogs with him, and they were blocking Shankara's path. For a moment, inborn caste-prejudice asserted itself. Shankara, the Brahmin, ordered the *Chandala* out of his way. But the *Chandala* answered 'If there is only one God how can there be many kinds of men? How can there be any distinctions of caste or creed?' Shankara was filled with shame and reverence. He prostrated himself before the *Chandala*. This incident inspired one of Shankara's finest poems, the *Manisha Panchaka*. It consists of five stanzas, each one ending with the refrain

He who has learned to see the one Existence  
everywhere.

He is my master—be he Brahmin or Chandala

Shankara began his teaching among the scholars of the country, converting the teachers first, and then their pupils. One of them was the famous philosopher Mandan Misra. Mandan Misra held that the life of the householder was far superior to that of the monk, and his opinion was respected and widely shared throughout India. Shankara determined to argue with him, and journeyed to his home. When he arrived he found the doors locked. Misra was holding a religious ceremony and did not wish to be disturbed. Shankara, with the mischievous spirit of a boy in his teens, climbed a nearby tree and jumped down from it into the courtyard. Misra noticed him among the crowd. He disapproved of monks—especially when they were so youthful—and asked sarcastically "Whence comes this shaven head?" "You have eyes to see, Sir," Shankara answered saucily. "The shaven head comes up from the neck." Misra lost his temper, but Shankara continued to tease him, and at length the two of them agreed to hold a debate on the relative merits of the monk's and householder's lives. It was understood that Shankara, if he lost, should become a householder, and that Misra, if he lost, should become a monk. The

debate lasted for several days Bharati the learned wife of Misra acted as umpire Finally Shankara was able to convince Misra of the superiority of the monastic life and Misra became his disciple It was he who later annotated Shankara's commentaries on the Brahma Sutras

Shankara's life came to an end at Kedarnath in the Himalayas He was only thirty two years old During this brief period he had established many monasteries and had founded ten monastic orders This was the first time that monasticism had ever been organized in India and Shankara's system still exists at the present day He was a reformer rather than an innovator He preached no new doctrine or creed But he gave a new impulse to the spiritual life of his time Separated by intervals of a thousand years like three tremendous mountain peaks Buddha Shankara and Ramakrishna dominate the range of India's religious history

Shankara's literary output was enormous He not only made commentaries on the Vedanta Sutras the principal Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita but produced two major philosophical works the Upadesasahasra and the Vivekachudamani (the Crest Jewel of Discrimination ) He was also the author of many poems hymns prayers and minor works on Vedanta

The Crest Jewel of Discrimination is written entirely in verse possibly because this would be

easier for pupils to memorize. The lines are long and the metre is intricate; we have decided not to attempt to reproduce it in English. Shankara's message is infinitely more important than its literary form: clarity has been our only aim throughout the text. For this reason, we have not hesitated to paraphrase and expand whenever necessary; but the translation remains, on the whole, very close to the original.

SHANKARA'S

# *Philosophy of Non-Dualism*

## 1

### THE SPIRIT OF SHANKARA'S PHILOSOPHY

"BRAHMAN—the absolute existence knowledge and bliss—is real. The universe is not real. Brahman and Atman (man's inner Self) are one."

In these words Shankara sums up his philosophy. What are the implications of this statement? What does he mean by real and by not real?

Shankara only accepts as real that which neither changes nor ceases to exist. In making this definition he follows the teachings of the Upanishads and of Gaudapada his predecessor. No object no kind of knowledge can be absolutely real if its existence is only temporary. Absolute reality implies permanent existence. If we consider our various experiences during the states of waking and dreaming we find that dream experiences are contradicted by waking experiences and vice versa—and that both kinds of experience cease in dreamless sleep. In other words every object of knowledge external or internal—for a thought or idea is

as much an object of knowledge as is the external world—is subject to modification and therefore, by Shankara's definition, "not real".

What, then, is the Reality behind all our experiences? There is only one thing that never leaves us—the deep consciousness. This alone is the constant feature of all experience. And this consciousness is the real, absolute Self. In dreamless sleep, also, the real Self is present as a witness, while the ego-sense which we call "ourselves", our individuality, has become temporarily merged in ignorance (avidya) and disappeared.

Vedanta Philosophy occupies a central position between realism and idealism. Western realism and idealism are both based on a distinction between mind and matter; Indian philosophy puts mind and matter in the same category—both are objects of knowledge. Shankara should not, however, be regarded as a precursor of Berkeley: he does not say that the world is unreal simply because its existence depends upon our perception. The world, according to Shankara, "is and is not". Its fundamental unreality can only be understood in reference to the ultimate mystical experience, the experience of an illumined soul. When the illumined soul passes into transcendental consciousness, he realizes the Self (the Atman) as pure bliss and pure intelligence, the "One without a second". In this state of consciousness, all perception of multiplicity ceases,

there is no longer any sense of "mine" and "thine", the world as we ordinarily know it has vanished. Then the Self shines forth as the One, the Truth, the Brahman, the basis of this world-appearance. World-appearance as it is experienced in the waking state may be likened, says Shankara, to an imagined snake which proves, on closer inspection, to be nothing but a coil of rope. When the truth is known, we are no longer deluded by the appearance—the snake-appearance vanishes into the reality of the rope, the world vanishes into Brahman.

Other systems of Hindu philosophy—Sankhya, Yoga or Nyaya—maintain that the phenomenal world possesses an objective reality, even though it may not be apparent to the eyes of an illumined soul. Adyaita Vedanta differs from them, on this vital point: it denies the ultimate reality of the world of thought and matter. Mind and matter, finite objects and their relations, are a misreading of Brahman, and nothing more—that is what Shankara teaches.

## 2

### THE NATURE OF WORLD-APPEARANCE

When Shankara says that the world of thought and matter is not real, he does not mean that it is non-existent. The world-appearance is and is not. In the state of ignorance (our everyday conscious-

ness) it is experienced, and it exists as it appears. In the state of illumination it is not experienced, and it ceases to exist. Shankara does not regard any experience as non-existent as long as it is experienced, but he very naturally draws a distinction between the private illusions of the individual and the universal or world-illusion. The former he calls *pratibhasika* (illusory) and the latter *vyavaharika* (phenomenal). For example, a man's dreams are his private illusions; when he wakes, they cease. But the universal illusion—the illusion of world-phenomena—continues throughout a man's whole waking life; unless he becomes aware of the Truth through knowledge of Brahman. Shankara makes, also, a further distinction between these two kinds of illusion and those ideas which are altogether unreal and imaginary, which represent a total impossibility or a flat contradiction in terms—such as the son of a barren woman.

Here, then, we are confronted by a paradox—the world is and is not. It is neither real nor non-existent. And yet this apparent paradox is simply a statement of fact—a fact which Shankara calls *Maya*. This *Maya* this world-appearance, has its basis in Brahman the eternal. The concept of *Maya* applies only to the phenomenal world, which, according to Shankara, consists of names and forms. It is not non-existent, yet it differs from the Reality, the Brahman, upon which it depends for its

existence It is not real since it disappears in the light of knowledge of its eternal basis World appearance is Maya the Self the Atman alone is real

### 3

## SUPERIMPOSITION OR MAYA

The most difficult of all philosophical problems is the relation between the finite and the Infinite the problem of how this finite world came into being If we believe that the finite has an absolute reality of its own and that it has emerged from the Infinite and is an actual transformation of the Infinite or if we regard the Infinite as a transcendental first cause of the phenomenal world (a position held by most Christian theologians) then we must admit that the Infinite is infinite no longer A God who transforms Himself into the visible universe is Himself subject to transformation and change—He cannot be regarded as the absolute reality A God who creates a world limits Himself by the very act of creation and thus ceases to be infinite The question Why should God create at all? remains unanswered

This difficulty is overcome however if we consider the world as Maya And this explanation of our universe is moreover in perfect accord with

the findings of modern science—which may be summarized as follows:

"A soap-bubble with irregularities and corrugations on its surface is perhaps the best representation of the new universe revealed to us by the theory of relativity. The universe is not the interior of the soap-bubble but its surface—and the substance out of which this bubble is blown, the soap film, is empty space welded into empty time."<sup>1</sup>

Thus it is only when we analyze the nature of the universe and discover it to be Maya—neither absolutely real nor absolutely non-existent—that we learn how the phenomenal surface of the soap bubble safeguards the eternal presence of the Absolute.

The Upanishads, it is true, appear to consider Brahman as the first cause of the universe, both material and efficient. They declare that the universe emanates from, subsists in and finally merges into the absolute Brahman. Shankara never directly contradicts the Upanishads, but he explains such statements in a different way. The universe, he says, is a superimposition upon Brahman. Brahman remains eternally infinite and unchanged. It is not transformed into this universe. It simply appears as this universe to us, in our ignorance. We superimpose the apparent world upon Brahm-

<sup>1</sup> Sir James Jeans

man just as we sometimes superimpose a snake upon a coil of rope

This theory of superimposition (vivartavada) is inseparably linked with the theory of causality. Causal relation exists in the world of multiplicity which is Maya. Within Maya the mind cannot function without causal relation. But to speak of cause and effect with reference to the Absolute is simply absurd. To seek to know what caused the world is to transcend the world. To seek to find the cause of Maya is to go beyond Maya—and when we do that Maya vanishes for the effect ceases to exist. How then can there be a cause of a non-existent effect? In other words the relation between Brahman and Maya is by its very nature unknowable and indefinable by any process of the human intellect.

#### 4

### MAYA A STATEMENT OF FACT AS WELL AS A PRINCIPLE

Thus according to Shankara the world of thought and matter has a phenomenal or relative existence and is superimposed upon Brahman the unique absolute reality. As long as we remain in ignorance (i.e. as long as we have not achieved transcendental consciousness) we shall continue to experience this apparent world which is the effect

kind of chain reaction which makes further superimposition inevitable. The claim to individuality for ourselves implies individuality everywhere. It automatically superimposes a multiple world of creatures and objects upon the one undivided reality the Existence which is Brahman. Ego idea and world appearance depend upon each other. Lose the ego idea in transcendental consciousness and the world appearance must necessarily vanish.

When and how did this act of superimposition occur? Was it at our individual birth or in some previous life? Was there an historical moment—corresponding to the story of the fall of Adam—at which the phenomenal world came into being as the result of the ego idea? The futility of such questions should be self evident. We merely go round in a circle. What is this world appearance? Maya. What causes it? Our ignorance. What is this ignorance? Maya also. If there was and is and always will be one unchanging reality how can we possibly assume that Maya began at some definite historical moment in time? We cannot.

Therefore we are forced to conclude as Shankara does that Maya like Brahman is without any beginning. Ignorance as the cause and world appearance as the effect have existed always and will always exist. They are like seed and tree. The coupling of the real and the unreal produced by our ignorance is a process universally evident in

our daily lives Shankara says It is obvious and needs no proof that the object which is the non ego and the subject which is the ego idea (super imposed upon the Self) are opposed to each other like light and darkness and cannot be identified Still less can their respective attributes be identified

Nevertheless it is natural to man (because of his wrong knowledge) not to be able to distinguish between these distinct entities and their respective attributes He superimposes upon each the nature and attributes of the other coupling the real with the unreal and making use of such expressions as I am that that is mine

Shankara is speaking here of two stages in the process of superimposition First the ego idea is superimposed upon the inner Self the existence reality Then the ego idea reaching outward as it were identifies itself with the body and the body's mental and physical attributes and actions We say as a matter of course I am fat I am tired I am walking I am sitting down — without ever stopping to consider what this I really is We go further We claim purely external objects and conditions for our own We announce that I am a Republican or that this house is mine As superimpositions multiply extraordinary statements become possible and normal—such as we sunk three submarines yesterday or I carry a good deal of insurance We identify our

of superimposition. When transcendental consciousness is achieved, superimposition ceases.

What is the nature of this superimposition? In the introduction to his commentary on the Brahma-Sutras, Shankara tells us that "Superimposition is the apparent presentation to consciousness, by the memory, of something previously observed elsewhere." We see a snake. We remember it. Next day, we see a coil of rope. We superimpose the remembered snake upon it, and thereby misunderstand its nature.

Shankara foresees an objection to his theory and goes on to anticipate and answer it. We may challenge the theory of superimposition by pointing out that Brahman is not an object of perception. How can we superimpose a snake upon a rope which we do not perceive? How can we superimpose a world-appearance upon a reality which is not apparent to our senses? "For every man superimposes objects only upon such other objects as are placed before him (i.e., as come into contact with his sense-organs)." To this, Shankara answers: "Brahman is not, we reply, non-objective in the absolute sense. For Brahman is the object of the ego-idea. We know quite well, by intuition, that the inner Self must exist, since the ego-idea is a presentation of the Self. Nor is it an absolute rule that objects can be superimposed only upon such other objects as are placed before us; for ignorant

people superimpose a dark-blue color upon the sky, which is not an object of sense-perception."

This statement needs some further explanation. Although Brahman is never apparent to our everyday sense-perception, there is a manner in which we are aware of the reality, the inner Self. Brahman, it has been said, is absolute existence, knowledge and bliss. Only in transcendental consciousness can we know this fully. Yet Brahman is partly apparent to our normal consciousness also. Brahman is Existence, and we all know that we exist. In this sense, every one of us has an intuitive knowledge of the inner Self (the Atman, or Brahman-within-the-creature). The inner Self, the reality, is never an object of sense-perception, however—because, in our ignorance, we superimpose the idea of a private individuality—of being Mr. Smith or Mrs. Jones—upon our awareness of Existence. We are unable to understand that Existence is not our private property, that it is universal and absolute. The inner Self is therefore present in our normal consciousness as "the object of the ego-idea"—a literal translation of Shankara's phrase. The superimposition of the ego-idea upon Existence is our first and most important act as human beings. The moment we have made this central act of superimposition—the moment we have said "I am I, I am private, I am separate, I am an individual"—we have set up a

ego more or less, with every object in the universe. And all the while, the inner Self looks on, utterly detached from these moods and antics--yet making them all possible, by lending to the mind that light of consciousness without which Maya could not exist.

That Maya is beginningless can also be shown if we return for a moment to the image of the rope and the snake. The superimposition of the snake upon the rope is only possible if we can remember what a snake looks like, a child who had never seen a snake could never superimpose it. How then is it possible for the newly-born child to superimpose the "snake" (world-appearance) upon the 'rope' (Brahman)? We can only answer this question if we postulate a universal "snake-memory", which is common to all mankind, and has existed from a time without beginning. This "snake-memory" is Maya.

Maya, says Sankara, is not only universal but beginningless and endless. A distinction must however, be made between Maya as a universal principle and ignorance (*avidya*) which is individual. Individual ignorance is beginningless but it can end at any moment. It is lost when a man achieves spiritual illumination. Thus the world may vanish from the consciousness of an individual and yet continue to exist for the rest of mankind. In say-

ing this Shankara's philosophy differs essentially from the subjective idealism of the West

## 5

### BRAHMAN AND ISWARA

In a sense Brahman is the ultimate cause of the universe—since by the action of Maya the world appearance is superimposed upon Brahman. Brahman is the cause Maya the effect. Yet Brahman cannot be said to have transformed itself into the world or to have created it since absolute Reality is by definition incapable of temporal action or change. Another word Iswara must therefore be employed to describe the creative principle. Iswara is Brahman united with Maya—the combination of Brahman and its power which creates preserves and dissolves the universe in an endless and beginningless process. Iswara is God personified God with attributes.

According to the Sankhya system of philosophy the universe is an evolution of Prakriti—undifferentiated matter composed of three forces called the gunas. Creation is a disturbance in the balance of these forces. The gunas begin to enter into an enormous variety of combinations—somewhat as in the western theory of atomic structure—and these combinations are individual elements objects and creatures. This concept of Prakriti corresponds

more or less, to Shankara's concept of Maya—but with this important difference. Prakriti is said to be other than, and independent of Purusha (the absolute Reality) while Maya is said to have no absolute reality but to be dependent on Brahman. Therefore it is Iswara, rather than Prakriti, who can be described as the ultimate cause of the universe.

Are there then two Gods—one the impersonal Brahman, the other the personal Iswara? No—for Brahman only appears as Iswara when viewed by the relative ignorance of Maya. Iswara has the same degree of reality as Maya has. God the Person is not the ultimate nature of Brahman. In the words of Swami Vivekananda, "Personal God is the reading of the Impersonal by the human mind."

Sri Ramakrishna, who lived continually in the consciousness of absolute Brahman, used the following illustration: "Brahman may be compared to an infinite ocean without beginning or end. Just as, through intense cold, some portions of the ocean freeze into ice and the formless water appears to have form, so, through the intense love of the devotee, Brahman appears to take on form and personality. But the form melts away again as the sun of knowledge rises. Then the universe also disappears, and there is seen to be nothing but Brahman, the infinite."

Although Iswara is, in a sense, a person, we must beware of regarding Him as similar to, or identical with the jiva, the individual human soul. Iswara, like the jiva, is Brahman united with Maya, but with this fundamental difference—Iswara is the ruler and controller of Maya, the jiva is Maya's servant and plaything. We can therefore say, without paradox, that we are, at the same time, God and the servants of God. In our absolute nature, we are one with Brahman, in our relative nature, we are other than the Iswara, and subject to Him.

Devotion to the Iswara, the Personal God, may lead a man very far along the path of spirituality, it may make him into a saint. But this is not the ultimate knowledge. To be completely enlightened is to go beyond Iswara, to know the Impersonal Reality behind the personal divine Appearance. We can become Brahman since Brahman is present in us always. But we can never become Iswara, because Iswara is above and distinct from our human personality. It follows, therefore, that we can never become rulers of the universe—for that is Iswara's function. The desire to usurp the function of Iswara is the ultimate madness of ego. It is symbolized in Christian literature by the legend of the fall of Lucifer.

Vyasa, the author of the Brahma Sutras makes the same point when he says that no one will ac-

quite the power of creating ruling or dissolving the universe since that power belongs to Iswara alone And Shankara in his commentary discusses the problem as follows If a man by worship ping the qualified Brahman (Iswara) achieves knowledge of the Supreme Ruler while still pre serving his individual consciousness—is his power limited or unlimited? When this question arises some will argue that his power is unlimited and they will quote the scriptural texts (referring to those who achieve knowledge of Iswara) They attain their own kingdom , To them all the gods offer worship Their desires are fulfilled in all the worlds But Vyasa answers this question when he adds without the power of ruling the universe All the other powers of Iswara can be acquired by the liberated but that power belongs to Iswara alone How do we know this? Because He is the subject of the scriptural texts concerning creation These texts do not refer to the liberated souls in any connection whatsoever That is why He is called the ever perfect The scriptures also say that the powers of the liberated are acquired by worshipping and searching after God therefore they have no place in the ruling of the universe Again because these liberated souls still preserve their individual consciousness it is possible that their wills may differ and that while one desires creation another may desire destruction The only

way to avoid this conflict is to make all wills subordinate to some one will. Therefore we must conclude that the wills of the liberated are dependent on the will of the Supreme Ruler."

If there is only one consciousness one Brahman who is the seer and who is the seen? Who sees Brahman as Iswara, and who is the jiva? Are they different or one?

As long as man is within the limitations of Maya the One is seen as many Ignorance can do no better than to worship Appearance and Iswara is the ruler of all appearances—the highest idea which the human mind can grasp and the human heart can love. The human mind can never grasp the absolute Reality it can only infer its presence and worship its projected image. In the process of this worship the mind becomes purified the ego-idea thins away like mist superimposition ceases. Iswara and world appearance both vanish in the blaze of transcendental consciousness when there is no seer, no seen—nothing but Brahman, the single all embracing timeless Fact.

## 6

### THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Every religion or system of philosophy has to deal with the problem of evil—and unfortunately it is a problem which is usually explained away

rather than explained "Why," it is asked, "does God permit evil, when He Himself is all goodness?"

One of two answers is usually given to this question by Western religious thought. Sometimes we are told that evil is educational and penal. God punishes us for our sins by visiting us with war, famine, earthquake, disaster and disease. He employs temptation (either directly or through the agency of the Devil) to test and strengthen the virtue of the good. This is the answer given by the Old Testament. It repels many people today and has become unfashionable—although, as we shall see in a moment, it contains a certain degree of truth, according to the philosophy of Vedanta.

The other answer—now more generally accepted—is that evil does not exist at all. If we view Life *sub specie aeternitatis* we shall know that evil has no reality, that it is simply a misreading of good.

Vedanta Philosophy disagrees with both these answers—with the second even more radically than with the first. How, it asks, can evil be changed into good merely by viewing it in a special manner? Pain and misfortune may be borne more easily if we fix our minds upon God—but they are very real experiences nevertheless, even though their duration is limited. Vedanta agrees that evil, in the absolute sense, is unreal. But it

reminds us that, from this standpoint, good is unreal also. The absolute Reality is beyond good and evil, pleasure and pain, success and disaster. Both good and evil are aspects of Maya. As long as Maya exists, they exist. Within Maya they are real enough.

The question "Why does God permit evil?" is, in fact, most misleadingly phrased. It is as absurd as if one were to ask "Why does God permit good?" Nobody today would ask why rain "permitted" a catastrophic flood, nobody would blame or praise fire because it burns one man's house and cooks another man's dinner. Nor can it be properly said that Brahman is "good" in any personal sense of the word. Brahman is not "good" in the sense that Christ was "good"—for Christ's goodness was within Maya, his life expressed the light of Reality reflected upon the relative world. The Reality itself is beyond all phenomena, even the noblest. It is beyond purity, beauty, happiness, glory or success. It can be described as "good" only if we mean that absolute consciousness is absolute knowledge, and that absolute knowledge is absolute joy.

But perhaps the question does not refer to Brahman at all. Perhaps, in this connection, 'God' means Iswara, the Ruler of Maya. If this is granted, can Vedanta Philosophy agree with the Old Testament that God is a law-giver, a stern

and somewhat unpredictable father whose ways are not ours whose punishments and rewards often seem unmerited who permits us to fall into temptation? The answer is yes and no. The Vedanta doctrine of Karma is a doctrine of absolute automatic justice. The circumstances of our lives our pains and our pleasures are all the result of our past actions in this and countless previous existences from a beginningless time. Viewed from a relative standpoint Maya is quite pitiless. We get exactly what we earn no more no less. If we cry out against some apparent injustice it is only because the act that brought it upon us is buried deep in the past out of reach of our memory. To be born a beggar a king an athlete or a helpless cripple is simply the composite consequence of the deeds of other lives. We have no one to thank but ourselves. It is no use trying to haggle with Iswara or propitiate Him or hold Him responsible for our troubles. It is no use inventing a Devil as an alibi for our weakness. Maya is what we make of it—and Iswara simply represents that stern and solemn fact.

Viewed from a relative standpoint this world of appearance is a bleak place and as such it often drives us to despair. The seers with their larger knowledge tell us otherwise. Once we become conscious even dimly of the Atman the Reality within us the world takes on a very different

aspect It is no longer a court of justice but a kind of gymnasium Good and evil, pain and pleasure, still exist, but they seem more like the ropes and vaulting horses and parallel bars which can be used to make our bodies strong Maya is no longer an endlessly revolving wheel of pain and pleasure but a ladder which can be climbed to consciousness of the Reality From this standpoint, fortune and misfortune are both 'mercies' —that is to say opportunities Every experience offers us the chance of making a constructive reaction to it—a reaction which helps to break some chain of our bondage to Maya and bring us that much nearer to spiritual freedom Shankara therefore distinguishes between two kinds of Maya—avidya (evil or ignorance) and vidya (good) Avidya is that which causes us to move further away from the real Self, and veils our knowledge of the Truth Vidya is that which enables us to come nearer to the real Self by removing the veil of ignorance Both vidya and avidya are transcended when we pass beyond Maya into consciousness of the absolute Reality

It has been said already that the principle of Maya is the superimposition of the ego idea upon the Atman the real Self The ego idea represents a false claim to individuality to being different from our neighbors It follows therefore that any act which contradicts this claim will bring us one step back toward right knowledge to conscious-

ness of the inner Reality. If we recognize our brotherhood with our fellow-men; if we try to deal honestly, truthfully, charitably with them; if, politically and economically, we work for equal rights, equal justice and the abolition of barriers of race and class and creed, then we are in fact giving the lie to the ego-idea and moving toward awareness of the universal, non-individual Existence All such actions and motives belong to what is known as ethical goodness—just as all selfish motives and actions belong to ethical evil In this sense, and in this sense only, goodness may be said to be more "real", or more valid, than evil—since evil actions and thoughts involve us more deeply in Maya, while good thoughts and actions lead us beyond Maya, to consciousness of the Reality

The words "sin" and "virtue" are somewhat alien to the spirit of Vedanta Philosophy, because they necessarily foster a sense of possessiveness with regard to thought and action If we say "I am good" or "I am bad", we are only talking the language of Maya "I am Brahman" is the only true statement any of us can make St François de Sales wrote that 'even our repentance must be peaceful'—meaning that exaggerated remorse just as much as excessive self congratulation, simply binds us more firmly to the ego idea, the lie of Maya We must never forget that ethical conduct

is a means, not an end in itself. Knowledge of the impersonal Reality is the only valid knowledge. Apart from that, our deepest wisdom is black ignorance and our strictest righteousness is all in vain.

7

### THE SUPREME GOAL.

It may be objected that Vedanta Philosophy, like every other system of religious thought, is based upon a central hypothesis. Certainly, the supreme goal of life is to know Brahman—if Brahman exists. But can we be sure of this? Isn't it possible that there is no underlying reality in the universe? Isn't it possible that life is just a meaningless flux, dying and becoming, in perpetual change?

What is so attractive about Vedanta is its undogmatic, experimental approach to truth. Shankara does not tell us that we must accept the existence of Brahman as a dogma before we can enter upon the spiritual life. No—he invites us to find out for ourselves.

Nothing—no teacher, no scripture—can do the work for us. Teachers and scriptures are merely encouragements to personal effort. But, as such, they can be very impressive. Imagine that this is a law-suit and that you are the judge. Try to listen

impartially to the witnesses on both sides Consider the witnesses for Brahman—the seers and saints who claim to have known the eternal Reality. Consider their personalities, their words the circumstances of their lives Ask yourself—are these men liars or hypocrites or insane, or are they telling the truth? Compare the great scriptures of the world and ask—do they contradict each other, or do they agree? Then give your verdict.

But mere assent, as Shankara insists, is not enough It is only a preliminary step toward active participation in the search Direct personal experience is the only satisfactory proof of Brahman's existence, and each of us must have it.

Modern Science goes a long way toward confirming the Vedanta world-picture It admits that consciousness in varying degrees, may be present everywhere Differences between objects and creatures are only surface differences, varying arrangements of atomic pattern Elements can be changed into other elements Identity is only provisional Science does not yet accept the concept of absolute Reality, but it certainly does not exclude it Shankara knew nothing of modern science, but his approach is fundamentally scientific It is based upon the practice of discrimination—a discrimination to be applied to ourselves and to every circumstance and object of our experience, at each instant of our lives Again and again—thousands

and thousands of times a day—we must ask ourselves "is this real or unreal, is this fact or fancy, is this nature or only appearance?" Thus we probe deeper and deeper toward the truth

We all know that we exist. We are all aware of our own consciousness. But what is the nature of this consciousness this existence? Discrimination will soon prove to us that the ego idea is not the fundamental reality. There is something beyond it. We can call this something 'Brahman'—but Brahman is only another word. It does not reveal the nature of the thing we are looking for.

Can Brahman be known as an existing substance or thing? Not in the ordinary meaning of the verb. To know something is to obtain objective knowledge of it, and such knowledge is relative, depending upon space time and causation. We cannot know absolute consciousness in this manner, because absolute consciousness is knowledge itself. Brahman is the source of all other knowledge; it comprises the knower, the knowledge and that which is known. It is independent of space, time and cause.

In this sense the practice of discrimination differs from the method of scientific research. The scientist concentrates upon some object of knowledge, and pursues it beyond the range of physical sense-perception, with the aid of apparatus, chemical analysis, mathematics and so forth. His research

extends like a journey, deeper and deeper into time and space. The religious philosopher is trying to annihilate time and space, the dimensions of the ego idea and thus uncover the Reality which is nearer and more instant than the ego, the body or the mind.

He is trying to be aware of what he already and always is—and this awareness is not an aspect of consciousness but consciousness itself. The illumined seer does not merely know Brahman, he is Brahman; he is Existence, he is Knowledge. Absolute freedom is not something to be attained; absolute knowledge is not something to be gained. Brahman is not something to be found. It is only Maya which has to be pierced; ignorance which has to be overcome. The process of discrimination is a negative process. The positive fact, our real nature, eternally exists. We are Brahman—and only ignorance divides us from this knowledge.

Transcendental consciousness or union with Brahman can never be investigated by the methods of scientific research since such research depends ultimately upon sense perception and Brahman is beyond the grasp of the senses. But this does not mean that we are doomed to doubt—or to blind trust in the experience of the seers—until we have reached the Supreme Goal for ourselves. Even a little effort in meditation and the spiritual life will reward us with insight and conviction that this

is really the way to truth and peace—that we are not simply deceiving or hypnotizing ourselves—that Reality is available. We shall have our ups and downs, of course, and our moments of uncertainty, but we shall always return to this conviction. No spiritual gain, however small, is ever lost or wasted.

## 8

### METHODS AND MEANS.

There are many paths to the attainment of transcendental consciousness. In Sanskrit, these paths are called Yogas, or ways to union with Brahman. Different Yogas suit different temperaments. Indeed, each individual will approach the Reality in a slightly different manner.

Four main Yogas are generally recognized in Hindu religious literature—Karma, Bhakti, Jnana and Raja. Very briefly, their characteristics are as follows:

Karma Yoga, as its name implies, is concerned with work and action. By working selflessly for our neighbors, by regarding all action as a sacramental offering to God, by doing our duty without anxiety or concern for success or failure, praise or blame, we can gradually annihilate the ego-idea. Through Karma we can transcend Karma and experience the Reality which is beyond all action.

Bhakti is the Yoga of devotion—devotion to Iswara, the Personal God, or to a great teacher, a Christ, a Buddha, a Ramakrishna. Through this personal devotion, this loving service to an embodied ideal, the devotee will ultimately transcend personality altogether. This is the Yoga of ritual, of worship, of the religious sacraments. Ritual plays an important part in it, as a physical aid to concentration—for the acts of ritual, like the acts of Karma Yoga, bring the mind back repeatedly from its distractions and help to keep it steadily upon its object. For many, it is the easiest path to follow.

Jnana Yoga, on the other hand, is more suited to those whose powerful and austere intellects mistrust the emotional fervour of worship. It is the Yoga of pure discrimination. It transcends the intellect through the intellect. It needs no Iswara, no altar, no image, no ritual. It seeks a more immediate approach to the Impersonal Brahman. This path may perhaps be more direct, but it is also hard and steep, and can be trodden only by the few.

Raja Yoga—the Yoga of meditation—combines to some extent, the three others. It does not exclude Karma Yoga and it makes use both of the Bhakti and the Jnana approach—since true meditation is a blend of the devotional and the discriminative.

By temperament, Shankara inclined toward Jnana Yoga, the way of pure discrimination—although as this book will show, he was capable of great devotion also Renunciation, discrimination, self-control—these are his watchwords Some may find his austerity too forbidding especially in the earlier portion of the dialogue, but it is precisely this severity which supplies a valuable corrective to the dangers of an easy sentimentality, an excess of carefree optimism a confusion of real devotion with mere emotional self indulgence Shankara was under no illusions about this world of Maya, he condemns its apparent pleasures and delights with brutal frankness For this very reason he was able to describe so powerfully the complete transformation of the universe which takes place before the eyes of the illumined seer When Brahman is experienced, when all creatures and objects are seen in their real relation to the Absolute then this world is indeed a paradise, it is nothing but Brahman nothing but utter consciousness knowledge and peace After arduous struggles the pupil in the 'Crest Jewel' achieves this realization, and Shankara's book closes with the magnificent outburst of his joy.

SHANKARA'S

*Crest-Jewel  
of Discrimination*

(*Viveka Chudamani*)

I PROSTRATE myself before Govinda the perfect teacher, who is absorbed always in the highest state of bliss His true nature cannot be known by the senses or the mind It is revealed only through knowledge of the scriptures

& & &

IT IS hard for any living creature to achieve birth in a human form Strength of body and will are even harder to obtain purity is harder still harder even than these is the desire to live a spiritual life and an understanding of the scriptures is hardest of all As for discrimination between the Atman and the non Atman direct perception of the Atman itself continuous union with Brahman and final liberation—these cannot be obtained except through the merits of a hundred billion well-lived incarnations

knower of Brahman, and whose compassion is as vast as the ocean itself.

\* \* \*

A MAN should be intelligent and learned, with great powers of comprehension, and able to overcome doubts by the exercise of his reason. One who has these qualifications is fitted for knowledge of the Atman.

He alone may be considered qualified to seek Brahman who has discrimination, whose mind is turned away from all enjoyments, who possesses tranquillity and the kindred virtues, and who feels a longing for liberation.

In this connection, the sages have spoken of four qualifications for attainment. When these are present, devotion to the Reality will become complete. When they are absent, it will fail.

First is mentioned discrimination between the eternal and the non-eternal. Next comes renunciation of the enjoyment of the fruits of action, here and hereafter. Then come the six treasures of virtue, beginning with tranquillity. And last, certainly, is the longing for liberation.

Brahman is real, the universe is unreal. A firm conviction that this is so is called *discrimination* between the eternal and the non-eternal.

*Renunciation* is the giving-up of all the pleasures of the eyes, the ears, and the other senses.

the giving-up of all objects of transitory enjoyment, the giving-up of the desire for a physical body as well as for the highest kind of spirit-body of a god.

To detach the mind from all objective things by continually seeing their imperfection, and to direct it steadfastly toward Brahman, its goal—this is called *tranquillity*.

To detach both kinds of sense-organs—those of perception and those of action—from objective things, and to withdraw them to rest in their respective centers—this is called *self-control*. True mental poise, consists in not letting the mind react to external stimuli.

To endure all kinds of afflictions without rebellion, complaint or lament—this is called *forgiveness*.

A firm conviction, based upon intellectual understanding, that the teachings of the scriptures and of one's master are true—this is called by the sages the *faith* which leads to realization of the Reality.

To concentrate the intellect repeatedly upon the pure Brahman and to keep it fixed there always—this is called *self-surrender*. This does not mean soothing the mind, like a baby, with idle thoughts.

*Longing for liberation* is the will to be free from the fetters forged by ignorance—beginning with

the ego sense and so on down to the physical body itself—through the realization of one's true nature.

Even though this longing for liberation may be present in a slight or moderate degree, it will grow intense through the grace of the teacher, and through the practice of renunciation and of virtues such as tranquillity, etc. And it will bear fruit.

When renunciation and the longing for liberation are present to an intense degree within a man, then the practice of tranquillity and the other virtues will bear fruit and lead to the goal.

Where renunciation and longing for liberation are weak, tranquillity and the other virtues are a mere appearance like the mirage in the desert.

Among all means of liberation, devotion is supreme. To seek earnestly to know one's real nature —this is said to be devotion.

In other words, devotion can be defined as the search for the reality of one's own Atman. The seeker after the reality of the Atman, who possesses the above-mentioned qualifications should approach an illumined teacher from whom he can learn the way to liberation from all bondage.

\* \* \*

A TEACHER is one who is deeply versed in the scriptures, pure free from lust, a perfect knower of Brahman. He is upheld continually in Brahman, calm like the flame when its fuel is consumed,

an ocean of the love that knows no ulterior motive, a friend to all good people who humbly entrust themselves to him

Let the seeker approach the master with reverent devotion Then, when he has pleased him by his humility, love and service let him ask whatever may be known about the Atman

O Master friend of all devotees I bow down before you O boundless compassion I have fallen into the sea of the world—save me with those steadfast eyes which shed grace, like nectar, never-ending

I am burning in the blaze of the world forest, which no man can extinguish Evil deeds out of the past drive me like huge winds hither and thither I am full of fear I have taken refuge in you Save me from death I know no other shelter

There are pure souls who have attained peace and greatness They bring good to mankind like the coming of spring They themselves have crossed the dreadful ocean of this world Without any selfish motive they help others to cross

It is the very nature of these great souls to work of their own accord to cure the troubles of others just as the moon of its own accord cools the earth when it is scorched by the fierce rays of the sun

The vessel of your lips has been dipped in and filled with the sweetness of the bliss of Brahman

Pour words from it like drops of nectar upon me  
They are purifying soothing and delightful to  
the ear Master I am consumed by the scorching  
heat of this worldly life as by the flames of a  
forest fire Blessed are they on whom your eye  
rests even for a moment—it is thus that you accept  
them and make them your own

How shall I cross the ocean of this world? What  
should be my goal? What way should I take? I  
know of none Be gracious Master Save me Tell  
me how to end the miseries of this earthly life  
Withhold nothing

Scorched by the fierce flames of the world  
forest the disciple speaks these words The great  
soul looks at the disciple who thus seeks refuge  
in him and his eyes are wet with tears of mercy  
Immediately he frees the disciple from his fear

This disciple who has sought his protection is  
one who thirsts for liberation who has properly  
fulfilled his duties whose heart has become tran  
quil and who has attained calmness of mind The  
wise and holy man out of compassion begins to  
instruct him in the truth

\* \* \*

O PRUDENT one do not fear! For you there is no  
danger There is a way to cross the ocean of  
worldly life I shall reveal to you that very method  
by which sages have reached the other shore

There is a certain potent method of putting an end to the horror of this worldly life By it you may cross the world ocean and reach the highest bliss

Meditation on the meaning of the truth as it is taught in Vedanta leads to the highest illumination By this means the misery of worldly life is altogether destroyed

Faith devotion and constant union with God through prayer—these are declared by the sacred scriptures to be the seeker's direct means of liberation To him who abides by them comes liberation from that bondage of physical consciousness which has been forged by ignorance

Because you are associated with ignorance the supreme Atman within you appears to be in bondage to the non Atman This is the sole cause of the cycle of births and deaths The flame of illumination which is kindled by discrimination between Atman and non Atman will burn away the effects of ignorance down to their very roots

\* \* \*

*The Disciple speaks*

Master please listen to the questions I am about to ask I shall feel blessed if I may hear an answer from your lips

What in reality is this bondage? How did it begin? In what is it rooted? How is a man set

free from it? What is the non-Atman? What is the supreme Atman? How can one discriminate between them? Please answer me.

\* \* \*

*The Master speaks:*

You are blessed indeed! You are drawing near to the goal. Through you, your whole family have become purified, because you long to get free from the bondage of ignorance and reach Brahman.

Children may free their father from his debts, but no other person can free a man from his bondage: he must do it himself.

Others may relieve the suffering caused by a burden that weighs upon the head; but the suffering which comes from hunger and the like can only be relieved by one's self.

The sick man who takes medicine and follows the rules of diet is seen to be restored to health—but not through the efforts of another.

A clear vision of the Reality may be obtained only through our own eyes, when they have been opened by spiritual insight—never through the eyes of some other seer. Through our own eyes we learn what the moon looks like. how could we learn this through the eyes of others?

Those cords that bind us, because of our ignorance, our lustful desires and the fruits of our

karma—how could anybody but ourselves untie them even in the course of innumerable ages?

Neither by the practice of Yoga or of Sankhya philosophy nor by good works nor by learning does liberation come but only through a realization that Atman and Brahman are one—in no other way

It is the duty of a king to please his people but not everybody who pleases the people is fit to be a king For the people can be pleased by the beauty of a vina's form and the skill with which its strings are plucked

Erudition well articulated speech a wealth of words and skill in expounding the scriptures—these things give pleasure to the learned but they do not bring liberation

Study of the scriptures is fruitless as long as Brahman has not been experienced And when Brahman has been experienced it is useless to read the scriptures

A network of words is like a dense forest which causes the mind to wander hither and thither Therefore those who know this truth should struggle hard to experience Brahman

When a man has been bitten by the snake of ignorance he can only be cured by the realization of Brahman What use are Vedas or scriptures charms or herbs?

A sickness is not cured by saying the word

"medicine" You must take the medicine Liberation does not come by merely saying the word 'Brahman' Brahman must be actually experienced

Until you allow this apparent universe to dissolve from your consciousness—until you have experienced Brahman—how can you find liberation just by saying the word Brahman ? The result is merely a noise

Until a man has destroyed his enemies and taken possession of the splendour and wealth of the kingdom he cannot become a king by simply saying 'I am a king'.

A buried treasure is not uncovered by merely uttering the words 'come forth' You must follow the right directions dig remove the stones and earth from above it and then make it your own In the same way the pure truth of the Atman which is buried under Maya and the effects of Maya can be reached by meditation contemplation and other spiritual disciplines such as a knower of Brahman may prescribe—but never by subtle arguments

Therefore the wise must personally exert all their powers to get liberation from the bondage of the world just as they would personally take remedies against physical ailments

\* \* \*

THE question you have asked today is a very good one It is relevant to the teachings of the scriptures Its meaning is hidden deep as within an aphorism It should be asked by all who seek liberation

Listen attentively O prudent one to what I say By listening you shall certainly be liberated from the bonds of the world

Of the steps to liberation the first is declared to be complete detachment from all things which are non eternal Then comes the practice of tranquillity self control and forbearance And then the entire giving up of all actions which are done from personal selfish desire

Then the disciple must hear the truth of the Atman and reflect on it and meditate upon it constantly without pause for a long time Thus the wise man reaches that highest state in which consciousness of subject and object is dissolved away and the infinite unitary consciousness alone remains—and he knows the bliss of Nirvana while still living on earth

\* \* \*

NOW I shall explain discrimination between the Atman and the non Atman which you must learn Listen carefully then realize the truth of it within your own soul

What the seers call the gross body is made up of these substances—marrow bone fat flesh

blood, skin, and epidermis It consists of legs, thighs, chest, arms, feet, back, head, and other parts It is known to be the root of that delusion of "I" and "mine".

The subtle elements are ether, air, fire, water and earth Portions of each of these, compounded together compose the gross body

Sound, touch, sight, taste and smell—these five essences of the elements are what we experience They exist in order to be experienced by the individual man

Those deluded beings who are tied to the objects they experience by the strong cord of desire, so hard to break, remain subject to birth and death They travel upward or downward, impelled by their own karma that inescapable law

The deer, the elephant, the moth, the fish and the bee—each of these goes to its death under the fascination of one single sense out of the five What, then, must be the fate that awaits a man who is under the fascination of all five senses?

The objects experienced by the senses are even stronger in their evil effects than the poison of the cobra Poison kills only when it is absorbed into the body but these objects destroy us merely by being seen with the eyes

Only he who is free from the horrible trap of craving for sense enjoyment, so hard to renounce, is ready for liberation—and no other, even though

he may be schooled in the six systems of philosophy.

So-called seekers for liberation, who lack the true spirit of renunciation, try, nevertheless, to cross the ocean of this world. The shark of craving catches them by the throat, and drags them violently from their course, and they are drowned mid-way.

He who has killed the shark of sense-craving with the sword of true dispassion crosses the ocean of this world without meeting any obstacle.

Know that that deluded man who walks the dreadful path of sense-craving moves nearer to his ruin with every step. And know this to be true also—that he who walks the path indicated by his teacher, who is his truest well-wisher, and by his own better judgment, reaps the highest fruit of the knowledge of Brahman.

If you really desire liberation hold the objects of sense enjoyment at a distance, like poison, and keep drinking in with delight such virtues as contentment, compassion, forgiveness, straightforwardness, tranquillity and self-control, as if they were nectar.

A man should be continually occupied in trying to free himself from the bondage of ignorance, which is without beginning. He who neglects this duty and is passionately absorbed in feeding the cravings of the body, commits suicide thereby. For

the body is merely a vehicle of experience for the human spirit

He who tries to find the Atman by feeding the cravings of the body, is trying to cross a river by grasping a crocodile, mistaking it for a log

Attachment to body, objects and persons is considered fatal to a seeker for liberation. He who has completely overcome attachment is ready for the state of liberation.

Kill this deadly attachment to body, wife, children and others. The seers who have overcome it go to that high dwelling place of Vishnu, the all-pervading.

This body, which is made up of skin, flesh, blood arteries, veins fat marrow and bone is full of waste matter and filth. It deserves our contempt.

\* \* \*

THIS physical body is composed of the gross elements which are formed by a five fold compound of their subtle elements. It is born through the karma of the previous life and is the vehicle of experience for the Atman. When the objective universe is being perceived this is known as the waking state of consciousness.

In the waking state of consciousness man finds his fullest activity in the body. In this state he identifies himself with his body, although he is

really separate from it. Through the external senses, he enjoys gross objects, such as garlands, perfumes, women and so forth, as well as other objects of sense-pleasure.

You must know that this body, through which man experiences the whole external world, is like the house of a householder.

The inherent characteristics of this gross body are birth, decay and death. It has various conditions, such as fatness or thinness; and various stages of development, such as childhood and youth. It is controlled by caste-rules, and the rules of the four orders of life. It is subject to various diseases, and to different kinds of treatment, such as worship, dishonor or honor.

Its organs of perception are the ears, skin, eyes, nose and tongue: through these we cognize objects. Its organs of action are the vocal organs, hands, legs, and the organs of excretion and reproduction. These involve us in action.

The mental organ consists of mind, intellect, ego, and the emotional nature. These are distinguished by their different functions. The function of mind is to consider the various aspects of an object. The function of the intellect is to determine the real nature of an object.

Ego is the self-consciousness which arises when the mental organ identifies itself with the body.

The tendency of the emotional nature is to draw us to that which is pleasing

The vital force is divided according to its five different functions 'Breath' is that function of the vital force which is used in respiration

"Downward breath" is used in excretion "Distributive breath" governs the processes of digestion and assimilation "Diffused breath" is present throughout the body, resisting disintegration, and holding it together in all its parts "Ascending breath" is used in eructation Just as gold is known by different names when it is fashioned into various ornaments just as water takes the form of waves foam, etc., so the one vital force is given these five different names according to its five different functions

Eight groups make up the subtle body. Five organs of perception, five organs of action, five functions of the vital force five subtle elements and the mental organ, together with ignorance, desires and karma

The subtle body is composed of the subtle elements before they have entered into their five-fold compounds It is the seat of our desires It is the field within which the fruits of karma are experienced Because of human ignorance, this subtle body has been superimposed upon the Atman from time without beginning

The dream-state belongs pre eminently to the

subtle body In dreams it creates its own kind of matter and shines with its own light The mental organ is the storehouse of the many impressions left by our desires in the waking state In dreams the mental organ identifies itself with the sense of ego and these impressions play over it But the Atman remains beyond as always in its own self luminous consciousness At that time the mental organ is its only covering The Atman witnesses everything but it is not in the least contaminated by our dream experiences It is free forever and untouched No karma created by its covering bodies can ever contaminate it even to the smallest degree

The subtle body is like a sharp tool in the hand of the carpenter It is the instrument of the whole activity of the Atman which is infinite wisdom Therefore the Atman itself is free from any taint

The conditions of blindness weakness and keen vision belong to the eye they are caused by its qualities and defects In the same way deafness and dumbness are conditions of the ear and tongue —but not of the Atman the knower

Inhalation exhalation yawning sneezing the discharge of saliva and the leaving of the body at death are said by those who know to be the various functions of the vital force Hunger and thirst also are functions of the vital force

The mental organ identifies itself with the

organs of perception and of action, as well as with the physical body. Thus the sense of individuality arises, which causes a man to live and to act. His consciousness is a reflection of the infinite consciousness of the Atman.

He who believes himself to be acting or experiencing is known as the ego, the individual man. Identifying himself with the gunas, he experiences the three states of consciousness—waking, dreaming and dreamless sleep.

When the objects of experience are pleasant, he is happy. When they are unpleasant, he is unhappy. Pleasure and pain are characteristics of the individual—not of the Atman, which is forever blissful.

The object of experience is lovable—not for itself, but because it serves the Atman. But the Atman itself is to be loved above all else. The Atman is forever blissful. For it, there can never be any suffering.

In dreamless sleep, when there is no object of experience, the joy of the Atman is felt. This is confirmed by our own experience—as well as by the scriptures, tradition, and logic.

\* \* \*

MAYA, in her potential aspect, is the divine power of the Lord. She has no beginning. She is composed of the three gunas, subtle, beyond percep-

tion It is from the effects she produces that her existence is inferred by the wise It is she who gives birth to the whole universe

She is neither being nor non being nor a mixture of both She is neither divided nor undivided, nor a mixture of both She is neither an indivisible whole nor composed of parts nor a mixture of both She is most strange Her nature is inexplicable

Just as knowing a rope to be a rope destroys the illusion that it is a snake so Maya is destroyed by direct experience of Brahman—the pure the free the one without a second Maya is composed of the gunas—the forces which are known as rajas tamas and sattwa These have distinctive characteristics

Rajas has the power of projection its nature is activity Through its power the phenomenal world which is involved in Maya begins to evolve Attachment desire and similar qualities are caused by its power as are also grief and similar moods of the mind

Lust anger greed arrogance jealousy egoism envy and other such vices are the worst characteristics of rajas When a man is overpowered by it he attaches himself to worldly actions Hence rajas is the cause of bondage

Tamas has the power of veiling the real nature of an object making it appear other than it is

It is the cause of man's continued subjection to the wheel of birth and death It also makes possible the operation of the power of rajas

A man may be intelligent clever and learned He may have the faculty of keen self analysis But if he is overpowered by tamas he cannot understand the true nature of the Atman even though it may be clearly explained to him in various ways He takes the appearance which is the product of his ignorance for the reality—and so he becomes attached to delusions This obscuring power of dreadful tamas is alas very great

Failure to perceive the actual object seeing some thing as different from what it really is vacillation of the mind taking delusions for realities these are the characteristics of tamas As long as a man is attached to tamas he can never get free from them And rajas also will trouble him without ceasing

Tamas has these further characteristics ignorance laziness dullness sleep delusion and stupidity A man who is under their influence cannot understand anything He lives like a somnambulist or an unconscious log of wood

Sattwa is purity Even when it is mixed with rajas and tamas as water is mixed with water it lights the way to liberation Sattwa reveals the Atman as the sun reveals the objective world

Sattwa when mixed with the other gunas has

these characteristics absence of pride, purity, contentment, austerity, a desire to study the scriptures, self-surrender to God, harmlessness, truthfulness, continence, freedom from greed, faith, devotion, longing for liberation, aversion to the things of this world, and the other virtues that lead toward God.

Sattwa in its pure state has the following characteristics tranquillity, direct perception of the Atman, absolute peace, contentment, joy and steady devotion to the Atman. Through these, the seeker tastes everlasting bliss

Maya has been defined as a composition of the three gunas It is the causal body of the Atman Dreamless sleep belongs pre eminently to the causal body In this state, the workings of the mind and sense-organs are suspended

In dreamless sleep there is no cognition of any kind But the mind continues to exist in its subtle form, like a seed The proof of this can be found in everybody's experience—that the mind, when we wake up still remembers 'I knew nothing'

There are the body the sense organs the vital force the mind the ego and all their functions the objects of enjoyment, pleasures and all other kinds of experience the gross and the subtle elements—in short, the whole objective universe, and Maya which is its cause None of these is the Atman

You must know that Maya and all its effects—from the cosmic intellect down to the gross body—are other than the Atman. All are unreal like a mirage in the desert.

\* \* \*

NOW I shall tell you the nature of the Atman. If you realize it you will be freed from the bonds of ignorance and attain liberation.

There is a self-existent Reality which is the basis of our consciousness of ego. That Reality is the witness of the three states of our consciousness and is distinct from the five bodily coverings.

That Reality is the knower in all states of consciousness—waking, dreaming and dreamless sleep. It is aware of the presence or absence of the mind and its functions. It is the Atman.

That Reality sees everything by its own light. No one sees it. It gives intelligence to the mind and the intellect but no one gives it light.

That Reality pervades the universe but no one penetrates it. It alone shines. The universe shines with its reflected light.

Because of its presence the body, senses, mind and intellect apply themselves to their respective functions as though obeying its command.

Its nature is eternal consciousness. It knows all things from the sense of ego to the body itself. It is the knower of pleasure and pain and of the

sense objects It knows everything objectively—just as a man knows the objective existence of a jar

This is the Atman the Supreme Being, the ancient It never ceases to experience infinite joy. It is always the same It is consciousness itself The organs and vital energies function under its command

Here, within this body, in the pure mind, in the secret chamber of intelligence in the infinite universe within the heart, the Atman shines in its captivating splendour like a noonday sun By its light, the universe is revealed

It is the knower of the activities of the mind and of the individual man It is the witness of all the actions of the body, the sense organs and the vital energy It seems to be identified with all these, just as fire appears identified with an iron ball But it neither acts nor is subject to the slightest change

The Atman is birthless and deathless It neither grows nor decays It is unchangeable eternal It does not dissolve when the body dissolves Does the ether cease to exist when the jar that enclosed it is broken?

The Atman is distinct from Maya, the primal cause, and from her effect, the universe The nature of the Atman is pure consciousness The Atman reveals this entire universe of mind and matter It cannot be defined In and through the

various states of consciousness—the waking the  
dreaming and the sleeping—it maintains our un  
broken awareness of identity It manifests itself as  
the witness of the intelligence

\* \* \*

WITH a controlled mind and an intellect which is made pure and tranquil you must realize the Atman directly within yourself Know the Atman as the real I Thus you cross the shoreless ocean of worldliness whose waves are birth and death Live always in the knowledge of identity with Brahman and be blessed

Man is in bondage because he mistakes what is non Atman for his real Self This is caused by ignorance Hence follows the misery of birth and death Through ignorance man identifies the Atman with the body taking the perishable for the real Therefore he nourishes this body and anoints it and guards it carefully He becomes enmeshed in the things of the senses like a caterpillar in the threads of its cocoon

Deluded by his ignorance a man mistakes one thing for another Lack of discernment will cause a man to think that a snake is a piece of rope When he grasps it in this belief he runs a great risk The acceptance of the unreal as real constitutes the state of bondage Pay heed to this my friend

The Atman is indivisible eternal one without

a second It is eternally made manifest by the power of its own knowledge Its glories are infinite The veil of tamas hides the true nature of the Atman just as an eclipse hides the rays of the sun

When the pure rays of the Atman are thus concealed, the deluded man identifies himself with his body, which is non-Atman Then rajas which has the power of projecting illusory forms, afflicts him sorely It binds him with chains of lust, anger and the other passions

His mind becomes perverted His consciousness of the Atman is swallowed up by the shark of total ignorance Yielding to the power of rajas he identifies himself with the many motions and changes of the mind Therefore he is swept hither and thither now rising now sinking in the boundless ocean of birth and death whose waters are full of the poison of sense objects This is indeed a miserable fate

The sun's rays bring forth layers of cloud By them the sun is concealed and so it appears that the clouds alone exist In the same way the ego which is brought forth by the Atman hides the true nature of the Atman and so it appears that the ego alone exists

On a stormy day the sun is swallowed up by thick clouds and these clouds are attacked by sharp chill blasts of wind So when the Atman is enveloped in the thick darkness of tamas the

terrible power of rajas attacks the deluded man with all kinds of sorrows

Man's bondage is caused by the power of these two—tamas and rajas. Deluded by these, he mistakes the body for the Atman and strays on to the path that leads to death and rebirth.

Man's life in this relative world may be compared to a tree. Tamas is the seed. Identification of the Atman with the body is its sprouting forth. The cravings are its leaves. Work is its sap. The body is its trunk. The vital forces are its branches. The sense organs are its twigs. The sense-objects are its flowers. Its fruits are the sufferings caused by various actions. The individual man is the bird who eats the fruit of the tree of life.

The Atman's bondage to the non-Atman springs from ignorance. It has no external cause. It is said to be beginningless. It will continue indefinitely until a man becomes enlightened. As long as a man remains in this bondage it subjects him to a long train of miseries—birth, death, sickness, decrepitude, and so forth.

This bondage cannot be broken by weapons, or by wind, or by fire, or by millions of acts. Nothing but the sharp sword of knowledge can cut through this bondage. It is forged by discrimination and made keen by purity of heart, through divine grace.

A man must faithfully and devotedly fulfill the

duties of life as the scriptures prescribe This purifies his heart A man whose heart is pure realizes the supreme Atman Thereby he destroys his bondage to the world root and all

Wrapped in its five coverings beginning with the physical which are the products of its own Maya the Atman remains hidden as the water of a pond is hidden by a veil of scum

When the scum is removed the pure water is clearly seen It takes away a man's thirst cools him immediately and makes him happy

When all the five coverings are removed the pure Atman is revealed It is revealed as God dwelling within as unending unalloyed bliss as the supreme and self luminous Being

The wise man who seeks liberation from bondage must discriminate between Atman and non Atman In this way he can realize the Atman which is Infinite Being Infinite Wisdom and Infinite Love Thus he finds happiness

The Atman dwells within free from attachment and beyond all action A man must separate this Atman from every object of experience as a stalk of grass is separated from its enveloping sheath Then he must dissolve into the Atman all those appearances which make up the world of name and form He is indeed a free soul who can remain thus absorbed in the Atman alone

\* \* \*

THIS body is the "physical covering". Food made its birth possible, on food it lives. without food it must die It consists of cuticle, skin, flesh blood, bone and water It cannot be the Atman, the ever-pure, the self-existent

It did not exist before birth it will not exist after death It exists for a short while only, in the interim between them Its very nature is transient, and subject to change It is a compound, not an element. Its vitality is only a reflection It is a sense-object, which can be perceived, like a jar How can it be the Atman—the experiencer of all experiences?

The body consists of arms legs and other limbs It is not the Atman—for when some of these limbs have been cut off, a man may continue to live and function through his remaining organs The body is controlled by another. It cannot be the Atman, the controller

The Atman watches the body, with its various characteristics actions and states of growth That this Atman, which is the abiding reality, is of another nature than the body must be self evident

The body is a bundle of bones held together by flesh It is very dirty and full of filth The body can never be the same as the self-existent Atman, the knower The nature of the Atman is quite different from that of the body

It is the ignorant man who identifies himself

with the body, which is compounded of skin, flesh, fat, bone and filth The man of spiritual discrimination knows the Atman his true being, the one supreme reality, as distinct from the body.

The fool thinks, "I am the body". The intelligent man thinks, ' I am an individual soul united with the body" But the wise man, in the greatness of his knowledge and spiritual discrimination, sees the Atman as reality and thinks "I am Brahman".

O fool, stop identifying yourself with this lump of skin, flesh fat, bones and filth Identify yourself with Brahman, the Absolute, the Atman in all beings That is how you can attain the supreme peace

The intelligent man may be learned in Vedanta and the moral laws But there is not the least hope of his liberation until he stops mistakenly identifying himself with the body and the sense organs This identification is caused by delusion

You never identify yourself with the shadow cast by your body, or with its reflection, or with the body you see in a dream or in your imagination Therefore you should not identify yourself with this living body, either

Those who live in ignorance identify the body with the Atman This ignorance is the root cause of birth, death and rebirth Therefore you must strive earnestly to destroy it When your heart is free from this ignorance there will no longer be

any possibility of your rebirth You will reach immortality

\* \* \*

THAT covering of the Atman which is called the vital covering is made up of the vital force and the five organs of action The body is called the physical covering It comes to life when it is enveloped by the vital covering It is thus that the body engages in action

This vital covering is not the Atman—for it is merely composed of the vital airs Air like it enters and leaves the body It does not know what is good or bad for itself or for others It is always dependent upon the Atman

\* \* \*

THE mind together with the organs of perception forms the mental covering It causes the sense of I and mine It also causes us to discern objects It is endowed with the power and faculty of differentiating objects by giving them various names It is manifest enveloping the vital covering

The mental covering may be compared to the sacrificial fire It is fed by the fuel of many desires The five organs of perception serve as priests Objects of desire are poured upon it like a continuous stream of oblations Thus it is that this phenomenal universe is brought forth

Ignorance is nowhere except in the mind The mind is filled with ignorance and this causes the bondage of birth and death When in the enlightenment of the Atman a man transcends the mind the phenomenal universe disappears from him When a man lives in the domain of mental ignorance the phenomenal universe exists for him

In dream the mind is emptied of the objective universe but it creates by its own power a complete universe of subject and object The waking state is only a prolonged dream The phenomenal universe exists in the mind

In dreamless sleep when the mind does not function nothing exists This is our universal experience Man seems to be in bondage to birth and death This is a fictitious creation of the mind not a reality

The wind collects the clouds and the wind drives them away again Mind creates bondage and mind also removes bondage

The mind creates attachment to the body and the things of this world Thus it binds a man as a beast is tied by a rope But it is also the mind which creates in a man an utter distaste for sense objects as if for poison Thus it frees him from his bondage

The mind therefore is the cause of man's bondage and also of his liberation It causes bondage when it is darkened by rajas It causes liberation

when it is freed from rajas and tamas and made pure

If discrimination and dispassion are practiced to the exclusion of everything else the mind will become pure and move toward liberation There fore the wise man who seeks liberation must de velop both these qualities within himself

That terrible tiger called an impure mind prowls in the forest of the sense objects The wise man who seeks liberation must not go there

The mind of the experiencer creates all the ob jects which he experiences while in the waking or the dreaming state Ceaselessly it creates the differences in men s bodies color social condition and race It creates the variations of the gunas It creates desires actions and the fruits of actions

Man is pure spirit free from attachment The mind deludes him It binds him with the bonds of the body the sense organs and the life breath It creates in him the sense of I and mine It makes him wander endlessly among the fruits of the actions it has caused

The error of identifying Atman with non Atman is the cause of man s birth death and re birth This false identification is created by the mind Therefore it is the mind that causes the misery of birth death and rebirth for the man who has no discrimination and is tainted by rajas and tamas

Therefore the wise, who know Reality, have declared that the mind is full of ignorance Because of this ignorance, all the creatures of the universe are swept helplessly hither and thither, like masses of cloud before the wind

Therefore, the seeker after liberation must work carefully to purify the mind When the mind has been made pure, liberation is as easy to grasp as the fruit which lies in the palm of your hand

Seek earnestly for liberation, and your lust for sense-objects will be rooted out Practice detachment toward all actions Have faith in the Reality Devote yourself to the practice of spiritual disciplines, such as hearing the word of Brahman, reasoning and meditating upon it Thus the mind will be freed from the evil of rajas

The "mental covering", therefore cannot be the Atman It has a beginning and an end and is subject to change It is the abode of pain It is an object of experience The seer cannot be the thing which is seen



THE discriminating faculty with its powers of intelligence, together with the organs of perception, is known as the "covering of intellect" To be the doer is its distinguishing characteristic It is the cause of man's birth death and rebirth

The power of intelligence that is in the "covet-

ing of intellect" is a reflection of the Atman, the pure consciousness. The "covering of intellect" is an effect of Maya. It possesses the faculty of knowing and acting. It always identifies itself entirely with the body sense organs, etc.

It has no beginning. It is characterized by its sense of ego. It constitutes the individual man. It is the initiator of all actions and undertakings. Impelled by the tendencies and impressions formed in previous births, it performs virtuous or sinful actions and experiences their results.

It gathers experience by wandering through many wombs of higher or lower degree. The states of waking and dream belong to this 'covering of intellect'. It experiences joy and sorrow.

Because of its sense of "I" and "mine", it constantly identifies itself with the body, and the physical states and with the duties pertaining to the different stages and orders of life. This "covering of intellect" shines with a bright light because of its proximity to the shining Atman. It is a garment of the Atman, but man identifies himself with it and wanders around the circle of birth, death and rebirth because of his delusion.

The Atman which is pure consciousness, is the light that shines in the shrine of the heart, the center of all vital force. It is immutable but it becomes the "doer" and "experiencer" when it is

mistakenly identified with the "covering of intellect"

The Atman assumes the limitations of the "covering of intellect" because it is mistakenly identified with that covering, which is totally different from itself. Thus man, who is the Atman, regards himself as being separate from it, and from Brahman who is the one Atman in all creatures. An ignorant man, likewise may regard a jar as being different from the clay of which it was made.

By its nature, the Atman is forever unchanging and perfect. But it assumes the character and nature of its coverings because it is mistakenly identified with them. Although fire is formless, it will assume the form of red hot iron.

\* \* \*

### *The Disciple*

Either because of delusion, or for some other reason the Atman appears to be the individual self. This mistaken identification had no beginning and that which had no beginning cannot have an end either.

Therefore this mistake about the individual soul's identity must be eternal and its wanderings through birth death and rebirth must continue for ever. Then how can there be any liberation? Master, kindly explain this to me.

## *The Master*

Your question is to the point, O prudent one  
Listen to me attentively Something which has  
been conjured up by delusion and only exists in  
your imagination, can never be accepted as a fact

By its nature the Atman is forever unattached  
beyond action and formless Its identity with ob-  
jects is imaginary, not real We say "the sky is  
blue Has the sky any color?

The Atman is the witness—beyond all at-  
tributes beyond action It can be directly realized  
as pure consciousness and infinite bliss Its ap-  
pearance as an individual soul is caused by the  
delusion of our understanding and has no reality  
By its very nature this appearance is unreal When  
our delusion has been removed it ceases to exist

Its appearance as an individual soul lasts only as  
long as our delusion lasts since this misapprehen-  
sion arises from a delusion of our understanding  
As long as our delusion continues the rope appears  
to be a snake When the delusion ends, the snake  
ceases to exist

It is true that ignorance and its effects have ex-  
isted from a time without any beginning But  
ignorance although beginningless comes to an end  
when knowledge dawns It is completely de-  
stroyed root and all like the dreams that vanish  
utterly when we wake When something which was

previously non-existent comes into being this implies that it has been non-existent from a beginningless time But this non-existence although beginningless, ceases as soon as that thing comes into existence It is clear, therefore, that ignorance, although beginningless, is not eternal

We see that a previous state of non-existence may come to an end, even though it is beginningless It is the same with the semblance of an individual self This semblance is due to a false identification of the Atman with the intellect and the other coverings The Atman by its very nature is essentially distinct and separate from them The identification of the Atman with the intellect, etc., is caused by ignorance

This false identification can be dispelled only by perfect knowledge Perfect knowledge according to the revealed scriptures is the realization of the Atman as one with Brahman

This is attained by an absolute discrimination between the Atman and the non-Atman Therefore a man should practice discrimination between the Atman and the individual self

Just as very muddy water shines transparently when the mud clears away so the Atman shines with a pure lustre when the impurities have been removed

When the darkness of unreality vanishes the eternal Atman is clearly revealed Therefore a man

should strive to free the eternal Atman from the unrealities of egotism and delusion

\* \* \*

THE covering of intellect which we have been discussing cannot be the Atman—for the following reasons it undergoes change intelligence is not its inherent nature it is finite it is an object of experience it is transitory The non eternal can not therefore be the eternal Atman

\* \* \*

THE covering of bliss <sup>1</sup> is that covering of the Atman which catches a reflection of the blissful Atman itself Nevertheless this covering is a creation of our ignorance Its nature consists of the various degrees of happiness which are experienced when a desired object is gained Its blissful nature is spontaneously felt by righteous men when they reap the reward of their good deeds It expresses that joy which all living beings may experience without making any effort towards it

The covering of bliss is fully revealed to us in the state of deep sleep It is partially revealed in the waking and the dreaming states when any desirable object is being enjoyed

This covering of bliss cannot be the Atman for the following reasons it has limitations it is

<sup>1</sup> Refers to the ego idea in man

an effect of Maya its joyful nature is experienced as the result of good deeds it is of the same kind as the other coverings which are all products of Maya

\* \* \*

IF WE reason and meditate on the truth of the scriptures transcending all the five coverings of ignorance we realize the ultimate Existence— which is the Atman the witness the infinite consciousness

The Atman is self luminous distinct from the five coverings It is the witness of the three states of consciousness It is existence changeless pure ever blissful It is to be realized by the man of discrimination as the Atman within himself

\* \* \*

### *The Disciple*

Master if we reject these five coverings as unreal it seems to me that nothing remains but the void How then can there be an existence which the wise man may realize as one with his Atman?

### *The Master*

That is a good question O prudent one Your argument is clever Nevertheless there must be an existence a reality which perceives the ego sense and the coverings and is also aware of the void

which is their absence This reality by itself remains unperceived Sharpen your discrimination that you may know this Atman which is the knower

He who experiences is conscious of himself Without an experiencer there can be no self consciousness

The Atman is its own witness since it is conscious of itself The Atman is no other than Brahman

\* \* \*

THE Atman is pure consciousness clearly manifest as underlying the states of waking dreaming and dreamless sleep It is inwardly experienced as unbroken consciousness the consciousness that I am I It is the unchanging witness that experiences the ego the intellect and the rest with their various forms and changes It is realized within one's own heart as existence knowledge and bliss absolute Realize this Atman within the shrine of your own heart

The fool sees the reflection of the sun in the water of a jar and thinks it is the sun Man in the ignorance of his delusion sees the reflection of Pure Consciousness upon the coverings and mistakes it for the real I

In order to look at the sun you must turn away from the jar the water and the sun's re

flection in the water The wise know that these three are only revealed by the reflection of the self-luminous sun They are not the sun itself

The body, the covering of intellect, the reflection of consciousness upon it—none of these is the Atman The Atman is the witness infinite consciousness revealer of all things but distinct from all, no matter whether they be gross or subtle It is the eternal reality, omnipresent, all pervading, the subtlest of all subtleties It has neither inside nor outside It is the real I, hidden in the shrine of the heart Realize fully the truth of the Atman Be free from evil and impurity, and you shall pass beyond death

\* \* \*

KNOW the Atman transcend all sorrows and reach the fountain of joy Be illumined by this knowledge, and you have nothing to fear If you wish to find liberation, there is no other way of breaking the bonds of rebirth

What can break the bondage and misery of this world? The knowledge that the Atman is Brahman Then it is that you realize Him who is one without a second and who is the absolute bliss

Realize Brahman and there will be no more returning to this world—the home of all sorrows You must realize absolutely that the Atman is Brahman

Then you will win Brahman for ever He is the truth He is existence and knowledge He is absolute He is pure and self existent He is eternal unending joy He is none other than the Atman

The Atman is one with Brahman this is the highest truth Brahman alone is real There is none but He When He is known as the supreme reality there is no other existence but Brahman

\* \* \*

BRAHMAN is the reality—the one existence absolutely independent of human thought or idea Because of the ignorance of our human minds the universe seems to be composed of diverse forms It is Brahman alone

A jar made of clay is not other than clay It is clay essentially The form of the jar has no independent existence What then is the jar? Merely an invented name!

The form of the jar can never be perceived apart from the clay What then is the jar? An appearance! The reality is the clay itself

This universe is an effect of Brahman It can never be anything else but Brahman Apart from Brahman it does not exist There is nothing beside Him He who says that this universe has an independent existence is still suffering from delusion He is like a man talking in his sleep

The universe is Brahman —so says the great

seer of the Atharva Veda. The universe, therefore, is nothing but Brahman. It is superimposed upon Him. It has no separate existence, apart from its ground.

If the universe, as we perceive it, were real, knowledge of the Atman would not put an end to our delusion. The scriptures would be untrue. The revelations of the Divine Incarnations would make no sense. These alternatives cannot be considered either desirable or beneficial by any thinking person.

Sti Krishna, the Incarnate Lord, who knows the secret of all truths, says in the Gita: "Although I am not within any creature, all creatures exist within me. I do not mean that they exist within me physically. That is my divine mystery. My Being sustains all creatures and brings them to birth, but has no physical contact with them."

If this universe were real, we should continue to perceive it in deep sleep. But we perceive nothing then. Therefore it is unreal, like our dreams.

The universe does not exist apart from the Atman. Our perception of it as having an independent existence is false, like our perception of blueness in the sky. How can a superimposed attribute have any existence, apart from its substratum? It is only our delusion which causes this misconception of the underlying reality.

No matter what a deluded man may think he is

perceiving he is really seeing Brahman and nothing else but Brahman He sees mother of pearl and imagines that it is silver He sees Brahman and imagines that it is the universe But this universe which is superimposed upon Brahman is nothing but a name

\* \* \*

BRAHMAN is supreme He is the reality—the one without a second He is pure consciousness free from any taint He is tranquillity itself He has neither beginning nor end He does not change He is joy for ever

He transcends the appearance of the manifold created by Maya He is eternal for ever beyond reach of pain not to be divided not to be measured without form without name undifferentiated immutable He shines with His own light He is everything that can be experienced in this universe

The illumined seers know Him as the uttermost reality infinite absolute without parts—the pure consciousness In Him they find that knower knowledge and known have become one

They know Him as the reality which can neither be cast aside (since He is ever present within the human soul) nor grasped (since He is beyond the power of mind and speech) They know Him in

measurable, beginningless endless, supreme in glory. They realize the truth "I am Brahman".

\* \* \*

THE scriptures establish the absolute identity of Atman and Brahman by declaring repeatedly "That art Thou". The terms "Brahman" and "Atman", in their true meaning, refer to "That" and "Thou" respectively.

In their literal, superficial meaning, "Brahman" and "Atman" have opposite attributes, like the sun and the glow-worm, the king and his servant, the ocean and the well or Mount Meru and the atom. Their identity is established only when they are understood in their true significance, and not in a superficial sense.

"Brahman" may refer to God, the ruler of Maya and creator of the universe. The "Atman" may refer to the individual soul, associated with the five coverings which are effects of Maya. Thus regarded, they possess opposite attributes. But this apparent opposition is caused by Maya and her effects. It is not real, therefore, but superimposed.

These attributes caused by Maya and her effects are superimposed upon God and upon the individual soul. When they have been completely eliminated, neither soul nor God remains. If you take the kingdom from a king and the weapons from a soldier, there is neither soldier nor king.

The scriptures repudiate any idea of a duality in Brahman Let a man seek illumination in the knowledge of Brahman, as the scriptures direct Then those attributes which our ignorance has superimposed upon Brahman, will disappear

"Brahman is neither the gross nor the subtle universe The apparent world is caused by our imagination, in its ignorance It is not real It is like seeing the snake in the rope It is like a passing dream"—that is how a man should practice spiritual discrimination, and free himself from his consciousness of this objective world Then let him meditate upon the identity of Brahman and Atman and so realize the truth

Through spiritual discrimination, let him understand the true inner meaning of the terms 'Brahman' and 'Atman', thus realizing their absolute identity See the reality in both and you will find that there is but one

When we say "This man is that same Devadatta whom I have previously met", we establish a person's identity by disregarding those attributes superimposed upon him by the circumstances of our former meeting In just the same way when we consider the scriptural teaching 'That art Thou', we must disregard those attributes which have been superimposed upon 'That' and 'Thou'

The wise men of true discrimination understand that the essence of both Brahman and Atman is

Pure Consciousness, and thus realize their absolute identity The identity of Brahman and Atman is declared in hundreds of holy texts

Give up the false notion that the Atman is this body, this phantom Meditate upon the truth that the Atman is "neither gross nor subtle, neither short nor tall", that it is self-existent, free as the sky, beyond the grasp of thought Purify the heart until you know that 'I am Brahman'. Realize your own Atman, the pure and infinite consciousness

Just as a clay jar or vessel is understood to be nothing but clay, so this whole universe born of Brahman, essentially Brahman, is Brahman only —for there is nothing else but Brahman, nothing beyond That That is the reality That is our Atman Therefore 'That art Thou'—pure, blissful, supreme Brahman the one without a second

You may dream of place time objects individuals, and so forth But they are unreal In your waking state, you experience this world but that experience arises from your ignorance It is a prolonged dream, and therefore unreal Unreal also are this body, these organs this life-breath this sense of ego Therefore 'That art Thou'—pure blissful, supreme Brahman, the one without a second

Because of delusion you may mistake one thing for another But, when you know its real nature

then that nature alone exists there is nothing else but that When the dream breaks the dream universe has vanished Does it appear when you wake that you are other than yourself?

Caste creed family and lineage do not exist in Brahman Brahman has neither name nor form it transcends merit and demerit it is beyond time space and the objects of sense experience Such is Brahman and That art Thou Meditate upon this truth

It is supreme It is beyond the expression of speech but it is known by the eye of pure illumination It is pure absolute consciousness the eternal reality Such is Brahman and That art Thou Meditate upon this truth

It is untouched by those six waves—hunger thirst grief delusion decay and death—which sweep the ocean of worldliness He who seeks union with it must meditate upon it within the shrine of the heart It is beyond the grasp of the senses The intellect cannot understand it It is out of the reach of thought Such is Brahman and That art Thou Meditate upon this truth

It is the ground upon which this manifold universe the creation of ignorance appears to rest It is its own support It is neither the gross nor the subtle universe It is indivisible It is beyond comparison Such is Brahman and That art Thou Meditate upon this truth

It is free from birth, growth, change, decline, sickness and death It is eternal It is the cause of the evolution of the universe its preservation and its dissolution Such is Brahman, and "That art Thou". Meditate upon this truth

It knows no differentiation or death It is calm, like a vast, waveless expanse of water It is eternally free and indivisible Such is Brahman, and "That art Thou". Meditate upon this truth

Though one, it is the cause of the many It is the one and only cause, no other beside it It has no cause but itself It is independent, also, of the law of causation It stands alone Such is Brahman, and "That art Thou". Meditate upon this truth

It is unchangeable, infinite, imperishable It is beyond Maya and her effects It is eternal undying bliss It is pure Such is Brahman, and "That art Thou". Meditate upon this truth

It is that one Reality which appears to our ignorance as a manifold universe of names and forms and changes Like the gold of which many ornaments are made, it remains in itself unchanged Such is Brahman and 'That art Thou'. Meditate upon this truth

There is nothing beyond it It is greater than the greatest It is the innermost self the ceaseless-joy within us It is absolute existence, knowledge and bliss It is endless, eternal Such is Brahman,

and ' That art Thou". Meditate upon this truth

Meditate upon this truth following the arguments of the scriptures by the aid of reason and intellect Thus you will be freed from doubt and confusion and realize the truth of Brahman This truth will become as plain to you as water held in the palm of your hand

\* \* \*

As A king is recognized distinctly amidst his army so realize Brahman as pure consciousness distinct from all imperfections Dwell for ever in the Atman Let this manifest world melt away in Brahman

Brahman dwells within the shrine of the heart —the eternal existence, the supreme the one without a second standing apart from the gross and subtle aspects of this universe The man who dwells within this shrine, united with Brahman is no longer subject to rebirth and death

The truth of Brahman may be understood intellectually But the ego sense is deep rooted and powerful for it has existed from beginningless time It creates the impression that ' I am the actor I am he who experiences ' This impression causes our bondage to rebirth and death It can be removed only by the earnest effort to live constantly in union with Brahman The sages define liberation as freedom from all such impressions.

and hence from the cravings which are caused by them

It is ignorance that causes our sense of identity with the body, the sense organs and everything else which is not the Atman He is a wise man who overcomes this ignorance through devotion to the Atman

Know your true Atman as the witness of the mind and intellect, and of the thought waves that arise in them Raise one single wave of thought constantly 'I am Brahman' Thus you will free yourself from identification with non-Atman

\* \* \*

CEASE to follow the way of the world cease to follow the way of the flesh cease to follow the way of tradition Get rid of this false identification and know the true Atman

When a man follows the way of the world the way of tradition and the way of the flesh knowledge of the Reality is not born within him

The wise say that this threefold way is like an iron chain binding the feet of the man who tries to escape from the prison house of this world He who frees himself from it attains liberation

\* \* \*

WHEN sandalwood is dipped in filthy water its delicious fragrance may be overpowered by the

smell of the filth But as soon as you rub the sandalwood the bad odor disappears and the air is filled with heavenly fragrance

The heavenly fragrance of the Atman is over powered by the foul odor of countless evil desires which are like mud within us Like sandalwood its fragrance will fill the air when it has been cleansed by constant rubbing with the thought

I am Brahman

The sweet fragrance of the Atman is over powered by innumerable cravings for the things of the senses These cravings can be destroyed by de votion to the Atman and then the light of the Atman becomes revealed

As the mind gradually becomes devoted to the Atman it frees itself by degrees from craving for sense objects When it has rid itself entirely of all craving the vision of the Atman is no longer obstructed

Through constant devotion to the Atman the mind's impurities dissolve away All cravings are obliterated Strive therefore to destroy this illusion

Tamas is overcome by both rajas and sattwa rajas is overcome by sattwa sattwa is overcome when the pure Atman shines Therefore be established in sattwa and strive to destroy this illusion

Be steadfast in your devotion knowing that the body will certainly continue to live as long as

it must Strive with patience and perseverance to destroy this illusion

Think 'I am Brahman I am not the individual soul', and reject everything that is non Atman Strive thus to destroy this illusion which has been created in the past by your craving for sense-objects

Learn the truth from the scriptures reason upon it and then know by your own direct experience that the Atman within you is the Atman in all Strive thus to destroy this illusion even to its last traces

The wise man has not the least concern with getting and spending Therefore strive to destroy this illusion through constant and single minded devotion to Brahman

Meditate on the truth That art Thou and realize the identity of the Atman with Brahman Strive to destroy this illusion and be established in the knowledge that Atman and Brahman are one

With watchfulness and concentration you must strive to destroy this illusion until all identification of the Atman with this body has completely ceased

Even though you may have reached a stage at which the universe and its creatures appear as dream images only no longer seeming real never

theless, O prudent one, you must still strive ceaselessly to destroy this illusion.

Do not waste a moment in concern for worldly affairs or attraction to sense objects. Remember Brahman even while you are asleep. Meditate upon the Atman within your own heart.

\* \* \*

STOP identifying yourself with this corruptible physical body, born of the flesh of father and mother. Regard it as impure, as though it were an outcast. Attain the goal of life by realizing your unity with Brahman.

The air in a jar is one with the air everywhere. In like manner, your Atman is one with Brahman. O prudent one, lose all sense of separation and enter into silence.

Realize that you are one with the self-luminous Brahman, the ground of all existence. Reject the physical universe and the body like pots of dirt.

The "I"-consciousness is now rooted in the body. Merge this consciousness in the Atman, which is absolute existence, knowledge and bliss. The consciousness of the subtle body is another limitation. Cast that off, also. Remain united with the Absolute forever.

The mirage of the universe is reflected in Brahman, like a city in a mirror. Know 'I am that Brahman', and you will reach the goal of life.

The Atman is the reality. It is your true, primal self. It is pure consciousness, the one without a second, absolute bliss. It is beyond form and action. Realize your identity with it. Stop identifying yourself with the coverings of ignorance, which are like the masks assumed by an actor.

\* \* \*

THE universe of appearance is indeed unreal. The sense of ego must also be unreal, since we observe how it comes and goes. But we are conscious, also, of being the witness, the knower of everything. This consciousness does not belong to the ego-sense and the other perceptions which exist only for a moment at a time.

The Atman is the witness of the ego and the rest. It is present always, even in deep sleep. The scriptures also declare that the Atman is unborn and undying. It is, therefore, distinct from the gross and the subtle coverings.

The Atman must necessarily be changeless and eternal, since it is the knower of all that is changeable. The non-existence of the gross and subtle coverings can be experienced over and over again, when we dream or pass into deep sleep.

Cease, therefore, to identify yourself with this lump of flesh, the gross body, and with the ego, the subtle covering. Both of them are illusory. Know your Atman—the pure, infinite conscious-

ness, eternally existent in the past, present and future Thus you will find peace.

Cease to identify yourself with race, clan, name, form and walk of life These belong to the body, the garment of decay Abandon also the idea that you are the doer of actions or the thinker of thoughts These belong to the ego the subtle covering Realize that you are that Being which is eternal happiness

\* \* \*

MAN'S life of bondage to the world of birth and death has many causes The root of them all is the ego, the first begotten child of ignorance

As long as a man identifies himself with this wicked ego, there can be no possibility of liberation For liberation is its very opposite

Once freed from this eclipsing demon of an ego, man regains his true nature, just as the moon shines forth when freed from the darkness of an eclipse He becomes pure, infinite, eternally blissful and self-luminous

When a man's mind is overpowered by extreme ignorance, it creates the sense of ego by identifying itself with the coverings When the ego is completely destroyed the mind is cleared of the obstacles which obstruct its knowledge of oneness with Brahman

The ego is a strong and deadly serpent, and the

gunas are its three angry hoods. It lies coiled around the treasure of the bliss of Brahman, which it guards for its own use. The wise man, inspired by the holy scriptures, cuts off the three hoods with the sword of knowledge, and utterly destroys that serpent. Thus he enjoys the treasure of supreme bliss.

There is no hope of a man's recovery, as long as any trace of poison remains in his body. Similarly, the spiritual seeker cannot attain liberation as long as any trace of the ego remains within him.

Utterly destroy the ego. Control the many waves of distraction which it raises in the mind. Discern the reality and realize "I am That".

You are pure consciousness, the witness of all experiences. Your real nature is joy. Cease this very moment to identify yourself with the ego, the doer, which is created by ignorance. Its intelligence is only apparent, a reflection of the Atman, which is pure consciousness. It robs you of peace and joy in the Atman. By identifying yourself with it, you have fallen into the snare of the world —the miseries of birth, decay and death.

You are the Atman, the infinite Being, the pure, unchanging consciousness, which pervades everything. Your nature is bliss and your glory is without stain. Because you identify yourself with the ego, you are tied to birth and death. Your bondage has no other cause.

This ego is your enemy It is like a thorn stuck in the throat of an eater Destroy this enemy with the mighty sword of knowledge and be free to enjoy the sovereignty of your own empire the bliss of the Atman

Check all the activities of the ego and the selfishness they involve Attain the supreme reality and be free from lust Dwell in silence and enjoy the bliss of the Atman Lose all sense of separateness and realize in Brahman your infinite nature

This mighty ego may be cut down to the very roots But if the mind feeds it even for a moment it will come to life again and cause a hundred mischiefs It is like a storm driven cloud in the rainy season

Conquer this enemy the ego Give it no opportunity by letting your thoughts dwell upon sense objects Such thoughts give it life as water gives life to a parched citron tree

If you identify yourself with the body lust will arise in you Free yourself from consciousness of the body and you will be freed from lust Thus if you are attached to this ego which keeps you separate from Brahman you will run after pleasure in the objects of the senses And this is the cause of bondage to birth and death

\* \* \*

THE more a man satisfies his cravings in the objective world, the more his cravings will increase. But if he controls them and ceases to gratify them, the seeds of craving will be destroyed. Therefore, let him gain self control.

When craving grows stronger self control is lost. When self control is lost craving grows stronger than ever. A man who lives thus will never escape the wheel of birth and death.

Craving is intensified if we let our thoughts dwell upon sense objects and seek temporary satisfaction in the objective world. In order to break the chain of recurring birth and death the spiritual seeker must burn both these causes of craving to ashes.

Craving which is nourished in these two ways will bring bondage to the wheel of birth and death. But there is a way to destroy all three—this craving and both its causes. Under all circumstances always everywhere and in all respects you must look upon everything as Brahman and Brahman alone. Strengthen your will to know the Reality, and these three will dissolve away.

Cease to find fulfilment of your cravings in the objective world and you will stop dwelling on sense objects. Stop dwelling on sense objects and your craving will be destroyed. When all craving has disappeared that is liberation. It is called liberation while living.

AS THE thick darkness melts utterly away before the radiant glow of the rising sun so the thirst for life in the ego is entirely removed when longing for knowledge of the Reality becomes intense

When the lord of day ascends darkness vanishes with its net of evil So when the absolute bliss is experienced there is no more bondage nor any trace of sorrow

Let this objective world vanish from your thoughts Let your mind dwell in the Reality which is full of joy No matter whether you are regarding external appearances or meditating with in yourself be intently absorbed in Brahman That is how you must pass your time until the residue of your past karmas is worked out.

\* \* \*

LET there be no negligence in your devotion to Brahman Negligence in the practice of recollection is death—this has been declared by the seer Sanat kumar Brahma's son

For a spiritual seeker there is no greater evil than negligence in recollection From it arises delusion From delusion arises the sense of ego From ego comes bondage and from bondage misery

A man may be learned but if he is negligent in the practice of recollection he will turn toward the lures of the senses The evil tendencies of his mind

will seduce him as a wicked woman seduces her lover

When sedge is displaced on the surface of a pond it closes in again at once So Maya closes in even upon a wise man, if he ceases to practice recollection

If the mind turns aside from Brahman its ideal, and becomes ever so slightly caught in the sensuality of objects it will continue to go downward through negligence in recollection like a ball dropped upon a flight of stairs

If the mind is directed toward sense objects it dwells upon the pleasures which are derived from them Indulgence in such thoughts excites craving Because of craving a man runs to gratify his desire

Hence to a man of spiritual discrimination a knower of Brahman there is no death but negligence in recollection The man who is absorbed in recollection attains liberation Therefore make the greatest effort to remain absorbed in the Atman

Through negligence in recollection a man is distracted from awareness of his divine nature He who is thus distracted falls—and the fallen always come to ruin It is very hard for them to rise again

\* \* \*

CEASE therefore to dwell upon sense objects that is the root of all evil He who has won liberation

in this life is liberated also when he gives up the body The Yajur-Veda declares that a man is subject to fear as long as he sees the least difference between himself and Brahman

Whenever a man—even if he has discrimination—sees the least distinction between himself and the infinite Brahman fear will arise in him Such difference is seen only because of ignorance

Reason sacred tradition and hundreds of scriptural texts declare that the objective universe has no real existence He who identifies himself with it encounters hosts upon hosts of sorrows

He who is devoted to contemplation of the Reality becomes liberated and attains the eternal glory of the Atman But he whose mind dwells upon the unreal will lose himself

The spiritual seeker must stop hunting after the unreal which causes bondage He must stand firm in the vision of the Atman remembering that

this Atman is myself Steadfast devotion to Brahman and meditation upon one's identity with Brahman bring joy and wipe out the immediate experience of suffering which is caused by ignorance

The pursuit of sense objects bears fruit in the increase of our evil tendencies which grow worse and worse We must know this by means of spiritual discrimination and avoid thinking about

sense-objects Apply yourself constantly to meditation upon the Atman

Refuse to dwell upon sense-objects, and peace will arise in your heart When the heart is peaceful, the vision of the Atman comes When the Atman has been directly realized, our bondage to this world is destroyed Therefore, refusal to dwell upon sense objects is the path to liberation

If a man is learned, capable of discriminating between real and unreal, convinced of the authority of the scriptures, possessed of the vision of the Atman and desirous of liberation, how can he cling like a child to what is unreal and able to cause his downfall?

For him who is attached to the body and its pleasures there can be no liberation He who is liberated is free from attachment to the body and its pleasures He who is asleep is not awake and he who is awake is not asleep These two states of consciousness are opposed to each other, by their very natures

When a man knows the Atman, and sees it inwardly and outwardly as the ground of all things animate or inanimate, he has indeed reached liberation He rejects all appearances as unreal and is established in the vision of the Atman, which is the Absolute, Infinite Being

To see that one Atman as the ground of all appearances is the way to deliverance from bond-

age There is no higher knowledge than to know that the Atman is one, and everywhere A man realizes that the Atman is everywhere and in all things if he rejects appearances and devotes himself steadfastly to the Atman, the Eternal Being

But how can a man reject appearances if he lives identified with the body, if his mind is attached to sense-objects, and if he pursues the fulfilment of his cravings? Only by strenuous effort can this rejection be accomplished Practice spiritual discrimination, and be passionately devoted to the Atman Renounce those selfish rewards which are obtained through the performance of actions and duties Give up seeking pleasure in sense-objects Desire nothing but possession of undying bliss

In the scriptures, it is said "When a man, who has heard the truth of Brahman from the lips of his teacher, becomes calm self-controlled, satisfied, patient and deeply absorbed in contemplation, he realizes the Atman within his own heart and sees the Atman as all "

For such a seeker, the above passage prescribes deep contemplation of the Atman in order that the Atman in all things may be realized

\* \* \*

IT IS impossible even for the wise to destroy the ego at a single blow—it is too firmly rooted in human nature, it continues, with its many crav-

ings through innumerable births The ego is completely destroyed only in those who have become enlightened through attainment of the highest transcendental consciousness

When a man's mind has become veiled in ignorance the power of projection whose nature is restlessness causes him to identify himself with the ego The ego seduces and distracts him with the desires which are its attributes

It is hard to overcome the power of projection until the veiling power of ignorance is completely destroyed When a man can distinguish as clearly between the Atman and external appearances as between milk and water then the veil of ignorance which covers the Atman will vanish naturally When the mind is no longer distracted by the mirage of sense objects every obstacle to realization of the Atman has undoubtedly been overcome

When a man becomes illumined by knowledge there arises within him perfect discrimination which clearly distinguishes the true Being the Atman from the external appearances Thus he is freed from the bonds of delusion created by Maya and is no longer subject to death and rebirth in the world of change

The knowledge that we are Brahman is like a fire which altogether consumes the thick forest of ignorance When a man has realized his oneness

with Brahman how can he harbor any seed of death and rebirth?

When the vision of Reality comes the veil of ignorance is completely removed As long as we perceive things falsely our false perception distracts us and makes us miserable When our false perception is corrected misery ends also

For example you see a rope and think it is a snake As soon as you realize that the rope is a rope your false perception of a snake ceases and you are no longer distracted by the fear which it inspired Therefore the wise man who wishes to break his bondage must know the Reality

Just as iron gives forth sparks when it is in contact with fire so the mind appears to act and to perceive because of its contact with Brahman which is consciousness itself These powers of action and perception which seem to belong to the mind are unreal They are as false as things seen in delusion imagination and dream

The modifications of Maya—ranging from the sense of ego down to the body and the sense objects—are all unreal They are unreal because they change from moment to moment The Atman never changes

The Atman is supreme eternal indivisible pure consciousness one without a second It is the witness of the mind intellect and other faculties It is distinct from the gross and the subtle It is the

real I It is the inner Being the uttermost ever lasting joy

Thus the wise man discriminates between the real and the unreal His unsealed vision perceives the Real He knows his own Atman to be pure indivisible consciousness He is set free from ignorance misery and the power of distraction He enters directly into peace

When the vision of the Atman the one without a second is attained through nirvikalpa samadhi then the knots of the heart's ignorance are loosed completely and for ever

You I this —such ideas of separateness originate in the impurity of the mind But when the vision of the Atman—the supreme the absolute the one without a second—shines forth in samadhi then all sense of separateness vanishes because the Reality has been firmly apprehended

\* \* \*

THE spiritual seeker who is possessed of tranquillity self control mental poise and forbearance devotes himself to the practice of contemplation and meditates upon the Atman within himself as the Atman within all beings Thus he completely destroys the sense of separateness which arises from the darkness of ignorance and dwells in joy identifying himself with Brahman free from distracting thoughts and selfish occupations

Those who echo borrowed teachings are not free from the world But those who have attained samadhi by merging the external universe, the sense-organs the mind and the ego in the pure consciousness of the Atman—they alone are free from the world, with its bonds and snares

The one Atman appears as many, because of the variety of its outer coverings When these unreal coverings dissolve away the Atman alone exists Let the wise man therefore devote himself to the attainment of nirvikalpa samadhi, in order that the coverings may melt out of his consciousness.

If a man loves Brahman with an exclusive and steadfast devotion he becomes Brahman By thinking of nothing but the wasp, the cockroach is changed into a wasp<sup>1</sup>

Just as the cockroach turns into a wasp because it gives up every other activity and thinks of nothing but that insect so the spiritual seeker who meditates on the reality of the Atman becomes the Atman because of his steadfast devotion

The true nature of the Atman is extremely subtle It cannot be perceived by the gross mind It must be known in the state of samadhi which can be attained only by those noble souls whose minds are purified and who possess an extraordinary power of spiritual discrimination

As gold which has been refined in hot fire is

<sup>1</sup> *Vespa solitaria*

purged of dross and restored to its own nature, so, through meditation, the mind purges itself of the dross of sattwa, rajas and tamas, and attains Brahman.

When the mind, thus purged by ceaseless meditation, is merged in Brahman, the state of samadhi is attained. In that state there is no sense of duality. The undivided joy of Brahman is experienced.

When a man reaches samadhi, all the knots of his desires are cut through and he is freed from the law of karma. Brahman is revealed to him, internally and externally, everywhere and always, without any further effort on his part.

It is a hundred times better to reflect on the truth of Brahman than merely to hear about it from the scriptures. And meditation is a hundred thousand times better than reflection. But nirvikalpa samadhi is infinitely the best of all.

In nirvikalpa samadhi—and in no other state—the true nature of Brahman is clearly and definitely revealed. In any other state, the mind remains unstable: it is filled with distracting thoughts.

Therefore remain constantly absorbed in the consciousness of the Atman within you. Control your senses and let your mind be tranquil. Gain the clear vision of your oneness with Brahman and thereby destroy the ignorance which Maya has created from time without beginning.

up the delusion that you are the body or any of the coverings—they are all unreal. Keep your mind recollected in the Atman. In truth, you are Brahman, the witness unfettered by the mind, the one without a second, the highest.

Fasten the mind upon Brahman, your goal. Do not allow the sense-organs to function externally; compel them to remain in their respective centers. Keep the body straight and firm. Take no thought for its maintenance. Be utterly devoted to Brahman, and realize that yourself and Brahman are one. Drink the joy of Brahman unceasingly. The springs of that joy never run dry. What use is there in the things of this world? They are empty of happiness.

Do not let your mind dwell on any thought which is not of the Atman. To do so is evil, a cause of misery. Meditate on the Atman, whose nature is bliss. That is the way to liberation.

The self-luminous Atman, the witness of all, is ever-present within your own heart. This Atman stands apart from all that is unreal. Know it to be yourself, and meditate upon it unceasingly.

Let there be an uninterrupted communion with the Atman, free from all distracting thoughts. In this way you will realize, without a doubt, that the Atman is your real nature.

Hold fast to the truth that you are the Atman. Give up identifying yourself with the ego, or any

of the coverings Remain completely indifferent to them, as though they were broken jars of clay

Fix the purified mind upon the Atman, the witness, the pure consciousness Strive gradually to calm your mind Then you will attain the vision of the infinite Atman

\* \* \*

MEDITATE upon the Atman as indivisible, infinite, like the all pervading ether Know it to be separate from the body, the senses, the vital energy, the mind and the ego—those limitations imposed upon us by our ignorance

The ether—though it fills hundreds of vessels, such as jars and pots of grain and rice, and seems various and divided—is really one not many So also the pure Atman when it is freed from the limitations of ego and mind is one and one only

All things—from Brahma<sup>1</sup> the creator down to a single blade of grass—are the apparently diverse names and forms of the one Atman They are simply appearances and not real Therefore meditate upon the Atman as one and infinite

The Atman is the ground and the reality This appearance of a universe is only seen through our deluded eyes When true knowledge arises, the Atman is revealed as existence itself, and the ap-

<sup>1</sup> Brahma one of the Hindu trinity the creator as distinct from Brahman God in his impersonal absolute aspect

parent universe cannot be seen apart from it You may mistake a rope for a snake, if you are deluded But, when the delusion passes you realize that the imagined snake was none other than the rope So also this universe is none other than the Atman.

\* \* \*

I, THE Atman am Brahma I am Vishnu I am Shiva \* I am this universe Nothing is, but I am

I dwell within I am without I am before and behind I am in the south and I am in the north I am above and I am below,

The wave, the foam, the eddy and the bubble are all essentially water Similarly, the body and the ego are really nothing but pure consciousness Everything is essentially consciousness, purity and joy

This entire universe of which we speak and think is nothing but Brahman Brahman dwells beyond the range of Maya There is nothing else Are jars pots and vessels distinct from the clay of which they are made? Man drinks the wine of Maya becomes deluded and begins to see things as separate from each other, so that he talks of "you" and 'I'

The scripture says "The Infinite is where one sees nothing else, hears nothing else knows noth-

\* The Hindu trinity Brahma the creator Vishnu the preserver Shiva the destroyer

ing else " In the Infinite, the scripture tells us there is no duality—thereby correcting our false idea that existence is manifold

I am Brahman, the supreme, all-pervading like the ether stainless indivisible, unbounded, unmoved, unchanging I have neither inside nor outside I alone am I am one without a second What else is there to be known?

What more remains to be said? I am none other than Brahman Brahman is this universe and all things that exist within it The scriptures declare that there is nothing else but Brahman Those who are illumined by the knowledge 'I am Brahman" renounce their attachment to this apparent universe It is certain indeed that these illumined ones live in constant union with Brahman, the pure blissful consciousness

\* \* \*

RENOUNCE all earthly hopes and physical pleasures by ceasing to identify yourself with the gross body Next, you must cease also to identify yourself with the subtle body Realize that you are Brahman whose form is bliss eternal whose glories the scriptures declare Thus you may live in union with Brahman

As long as a man loves this mortal body he remains impure he is troubled by his enemies in all manner of ways he is still subject to rebirth, dis-

ease and death But if he will meditate upon the Atman as pure unchangeable, the essence of goodness, he will be delivered from all evil The scriptures also confirm this truth

Cease to identify yourself mistakenly with all those coverings such as the ego etc , which overlie the Atman Brahman alone remains—supreme infinite, changeless, the one without a second

\* \* \*

WHEN the mind is completely absorbed in the supreme Being—the Atman, the Brahman, the Absolute—then the world of appearances vanishes Its existence is no more than an empty word

The world of appearances is a mere phantom; there is but one Reality It is changeless, formless and absolute How can it be divided?

There is neither seer nor seeing nor seen There is but one Reality—changeless formless and absolute How can it be divided?

There is but one Reality—like a brimming ocean in which all appearances are dissolved It is changeless formless and absolute How can it be divided?

Into it, the causes of our delusion melt away, as darkness melts into light It is supreme, absolute, one without a second How can it be divided?

There is but one supreme Reality It is the very self of unity It cannot possibly be divided into

many. If multiplicity is real, and not merely apparent, why does no one ever experience it while enjoying dreamless sleep?

The universe no longer exists after we have awakened into the highest consciousness in the eternal Atman, which is Brahman, devoid of any distinction or division. At no time—either past, present or future—is there really a snake within the rope or a drop of water in the mirage.

The scriptures declare that this relative universe is only an appearance. The Absolute is non-dual. In dreamless sleep, also, the universe disappears.

It is our delusion which superimposes the universe upon Brahman. But the wise know that this universe has no separate reality. It is identical with Brahman, its ground. The rope may appear to be a snake, but the apparent difference between rope and snake only lasts as long as delusion persists.

This delusion of difference has its origin in the gross mind. When the mind is transcended, it ceases. Therefore let your mind be absorbed in contemplation of the Atman, the reality, your inmost essence.

\* \* \*

WHEN the mind achieves perfect union with Brahman, the wise man realizes Brahman entirely within his own heart. Brahman is beyond speech or thought. It is the pure, eternal consciousness. It is absolute bliss. It is incomparable and im-

measurable It is ever free beyond all action  
boundless as the sky indivisible and absolute

When the mind achieves perfect union with  
Brahman the wise man realizes Brahman entirely  
within his own heart Brahman is beyond cause  
and effect It is the reality beyond all thought  
It is eternally the same peerless outside the range  
of any mental conception It is revealed by the  
sacred scriptures and it is forever revealing itself  
in us through our sense of ego

When the mind achieves perfect union with  
Brahman the wise man realizes Brahman entirely  
within his own heart Brahman knows no decay  
or death It is the Reality without beginning and  
without end It is like a vast sheet of water shore  
less and calm It is beyond the play of the gunas  
It is one the eternal forever tranquil

Be absorbed in union with your true Being  
and behold the Atman of infinite glory Escape  
the bondage and the rotten stench of worldliness  
Make a strenuous effort and attain liberation Then  
you will not have been born into this world in  
vain

Meditate upon the Atman your true Being  
which is free from all coverings and limitations  
the infinite existence knowledge and bliss the  
one without a second Thus you will escape from  
the wheel of birth and death

\* \* \*

THE effects of past actions cause the "illumined seer to continue to live on in the body—but to him the body is only an appearance, like a man's shadow. And when he puts off the body as a corpse he will never again be born into another body

Realize the Atman, the eternal pure consciousness and bliss Detach yourself completely from this covering, the body, which is sluggish and foul Having done this, never think of it again To remember one's own vomit is merely disgusting

The truly wise man burns his ignorance with all its effects in the fire of Brahman—the Absolute, the Eternal, the very Self He then remains established in the knowledge of the Atman, the eternal pure consciousness and bliss

A cow is indifferent to the garland which is hung around her neck The knower of Brahman is indifferent to the fate of this body, which continues to live on through the effect of his past actions His mind is absorbed in the blissful Brahman

The knower of Brahman has realized his true Being the Atman which is endless joy What motive or desire can be possibly have to attach himself any longer to this body and to nourish it?

To taste within his own heart and in the external world the endless bliss of the Atman—

such is the reward obtained by the yogin who has reached perfection and liberation in this life

\* \* \*

THE fruit of dispassion is illumination the fruit of illumination is the stilling of desire the fruit of stilled desire is experience of the bliss of the Atman whence follows peace

The first steps are worthless unless the path be followed to the end Dispassion supreme satisfaction and incomparable bliss must follow one another naturally

It is well known that the fruit of illumination is the cessation of suffering A man may do many evil deeds through ignorance But how can he continue to do evil when discrimination has been awakened within him?

Illumination causes a man to turn away from the evil and the unreal attachment to these is the result of ignorance Compare a man who knows what a mirage is with a man who is ignorant of its nature The former turns away from it the latter runs toward it to satisfy his thirst The man of realization is no longer lured by the world of appearances—that is his evident reward

When the heart's knot of ignorance is cut right through a man is freed from all craving for material objects When this has happened is there

anything in the world which can possibly cause him to feel any attachment?

When the objects of enjoyment fail to arouse any craving, that is perfect renunciation. When there is no longer any sense of ego, that is perfect knowledge. When the mind is absorbed in Brahman and no longer distracted by any other thought, that is perfect self-withdrawal.

A man who remains continually absorbed in the consciousness of Brahman is freed from the tyranny of the objective world. The enjoyments which others find so irresistible he values as little as a small baby would, or a man who was sound asleep. When, at moments, he becomes conscious of this world, he looks upon it as a world of dreams. He enjoys the fruits of endless merit. Such a man is blessed indeed. He is esteemed on earth.

The self-controlled man is said to be illumined when he enjoys eternal bliss. He is entirely merged in Brahman. He knows himself to be the unchangeable Reality, which is beyond action.

\* \* \*

THE state of illumination is described as follows. There is a continuous consciousness of the unity of Atman and Brahman. There is no longer any identification of the Atman with its coverings. All sense of duality is obliterated. There is pure, uni-

fied consciousness The man who is well established in this consciousness is said to be illuminated

A man is said to be free even in this life when he is established in illumination His bliss is unending He almost forgets this world of appearances

Even though his mind is dissolved in Brahman, he is fully awake free from the ignorance of waking life He is fully conscious but free from any craving Such a man is said to be free even in this life

For him the sorrows of this world are over Though he possesses a finite body he remains united with the Infinite His heart knows no anxiety Such a man is said to be free even in this life

Though he lives in the body it seems merely like a shadow following him He is no longer troubled by the thought of I and mine Such are the characteristics of a man who is free even in this life

He does not care to delve into the past He is not interested in scanning the future He is indifferent to the present That is how you may know the man who is free even in this life

Good and evil appear to exist in the world Persons and objects seem to be distinct from each other Nevertheless he regards everything from the standpoint of equality for he sees Brahman in all

That is how you may know the man who is free even in this life

Good or evil fortune may come He regards them both with indifference and remains unaffected by either That is how you may know the man who is free even in this life

Because his mind is continually engaged in tasting the bliss of Brahman he is unable to distinguish between the internal and the external That is how you may know the man who is free even in this life

Life flows by he watches it like a disinterested spectator He does not identify himself with the body sense organs etc He has risen above the idea of duty That is how you may know the man who is free even in this life

By the help of the living words of the scriptures he has realized his oneness with Brahman He is no longer bound to rebirth That is how you may know the man who is free even in this life

He never identifies himself with the body or the sense organs He has no feeling of ownership That is how you may know the man who is free even in this life

Through his transcendental vision he has realized that there is no difference between man and Brahman or between Brahman and the universe—for he sees that Brahman is all That is how you may know the man who is free even in this life

Holy men may honor him evil men may insult him—his feelings are the same That is how you may know the man who is free even in this life

Rivers flow into the ocean but the ocean is not disturbed Sense objects flow into his mind but he feels no reaction for he lives in the consciousness of the one Reality He is free indeed even in this life

\* \* \*

HE WHO has known the reality of Brahman cannot continue to feel attachment to this world He who feels attachment has not known Brahman He remains deluded and sensebound

Of a man who has known Brahman it cannot be said that he is still attached to sense objects because of the strong impressions and old habits of his past desires No—his desires and tendencies are wiped out because he has realized his identity with Brahman

Even a very lustful man feels no desire when he is in the presence of his mother In the same manner a man is freed from worldliness if he has realized Brahman the infinite bliss

The scriptures declare that even the man of meditation is conscious of the external world because of tendencies created by his former way of life These tendencies are said to be working themselves out in him

As long as a man experiences pleasure and pain his past tendencies will persist Every effect is preceded by a cause Where there is no cause there is no effect

When a man wakes from his dream his dream actions vanish into nothingness When a man wakes to the knowledge that he is Brahman all accumulated causes all past actions performed in the course of millions and millions of lives are dissolved away

While a man is asleep he may dream that he is doing good deeds or committing dreadful sins But when the dream breaks how can these dream actions lead him either to heaven or to hell?

The Atman is forever free and pure and un touchable as the ether He who has realized the Atman can never be bound by his actions past present or to come

\*The ether enclosed within a jar is not affected by the smell of the wine The Atman within its coverings is not affected by the properties of the coverings

\* \* \*

### <sup>1</sup> The Disciple

I understand that after the attainment of illumination no action can affect the Atman But what about actions done before the dawn of knowledge?

Knowledge cannot cancel their effects An arrow shot at a mark cannot be turned aside

Suppose you mistake a cow for a tiger and shoot at it The arrow will not stop when you discover that the cow is not a tiger It will strike the cow

### | The Master

Yes you are right Past actions are very powerful if they have already begun to produce their effects They must exhaust their power through actual experience even in the case of an illumined soul The fire of knowledge destroys the whole accumulation of present and future karmas and of past karmas which have not yet begun to produce effects But it cannot destroy those past karmas which have already begun to produce effects How ever none of these karmas can really affect those who have realized their identity with Brahman and live continually absorbed in that consciousness Such men have become united with Brahman the one beyond all attributes

The seer lives absorbed in the consciousness of the Atman He has realized his identity with Brahman Brahman is pure and free from the qualities which belong to the gross and subtle coverings Past karmas belong to these coverings—therefore they do not affect the seer When a man is

awake, he is no longer in bondage to the apparent world of his dreams

The man who has awakened no longer identifies himself with his dream-body, his dream-actions, or the objects of his dream. He comes to himself simply by waking up.

He does not try to maintain that the objects of his dream are real, nor does he seek to possess them. If he still pursues the objects of the dream world, then he has certainly not yet awakened from his sleep.

Similarly, he who has awakened to the knowledge of Brahman lives absorbed in union with the eternal Atman. He sees nothing else. True he has to eat, he has to sustain his body as long as he lives in the world. But such actions are performed as it were, from memory. They are like the remembered actions of a dream.

Birth into a body is the result of karma. It may be said therefore, that past actions only affect the body. The Atman is beginningless. It cannot be said to be born as a result of karma. And so it is unreasonable to think that karma can affect the Atman.

The infallible words of the scriptures declare that "the Atman is unborn, eternal never subject to decay." How, therefore, can any karma be supposed to affect the man who lives in the consciousness of the Atman?

The accumulated causes due to past actions affect a man who identifies himself with the body. The illumined soul knows that this identification is false. That is why he is not affected by such karma.

It is foolish even to think that the accumulated causes due to past actions can affect the body. How can this body be real when it has only an illusory existence? How can something unreal have a birth? How can something die which has never been born? How can actions or their effects affect what is unreal?

When knowledge dawns ignorance and the effects of ignorance vanish. The ignorant man may ask If that is so how can the body of an illumined soul continue to exist? But when the scriptures say that the continuance of the body is caused by past actions they are simply explaining things in a way which the ignorant can understand. They do not mean to prove the reality of the body and the other coverings from the standpoint of an illumined soul.



FROM the standpoint of the illumined soul Brahman fills everything—beginningless endless unmeasurable unchanging one without a second. In Brahman there is no diversity whatsoever.

Brahman is pure existence pure consciousness

eternal bliss beyond action one without a second  
In Brahman there is no diversity whatsoever

Brahman is the innermost consciousness filled  
full of endless bliss infinite omnipresent one  
without a second In Brahman there is no diversity  
whatsoever

Brahman cannot be avoided since it is every  
where Brahman cannot be grasped since it is  
transcendent It cannot be contained since it con-  
tains all things It is one without a second In  
Brahman there is no diversity whatsoever

Brahman is without parts or attributes It is  
subtle absolute taintless one without a second  
In Brahman there is no diversity whatsoever

Brahman is indefinable beyond the range of  
mind and speech one without a second In Brahm-  
an there is no diversity whatsoever

Brahman is reality itself established in its own  
glory pure absolute consciousness having no  
equal one without a second In Brahman there is  
no diversity whatsoever

\* \* \*

THE spiritual seekers those great hearted souls  
who have freed themselves from all cravings cast  
ing aside sensual pleasures tranquil and self con-  
trolled—they realize this supreme truth of Brahm-  
an They attain union with Brahman and reach  
the highest bliss

You, too, must discriminate and realize the supreme truth of Brahman. Realize the true nature of the Atman as the sum of all bliss. Shake off the delusions which your own mind has created. Thus you will become free and illumined. You will make your life blessed.

Calm your mind utterly and attain samadhi. Then you will have open vision, seeing clearly the truth of the Atman. From the lips of your teacher you have learned of the truth of Brahman as it is revealed in the scriptures. Now you must realize that truth directly and immediately. Then only will your heart be free from any doubt.

\* \* \*

How are you to know for certain that you are liberated from the bondage of ignorance and have realized the Atman, which is absolute existence, pure consciousness and abiding bliss? The words of the scriptures, your own power of reasoning and the teaching of your master should all help to convince you—but the only absolute proof is direct and immediate experience, within your own soul.

Bondage and liberation, satisfaction and anxiety, sickness and renewed health, hunger and so forth—these are matters of personal experience. You know yourself. Others can only guess at your condition.

Teachers and scriptures can stimulate spiritual

awareness But the wise disciple crosses the ocean of his ignorance by direct illumination through the grace of God

Gain experience directly Realize God for yourself Know the Atman as the one indivisible Being and become perfect Free your mind from all distractions and dwell in the consciousness of the Atman

This is the final declaration of Vedanta Brahman is all—this universe and every creature To be liberated is to live in Brahman the undivided reality Brahman is one without a second as the scriptures bear witness

\* \* \*

THE disciple listened attentively to the words of his teacher He learned the supreme truth of Brahman to which the scriptures bear witness and confirmed it by the aid of his own reasoning powers He then withdrew his senses from the objective world and concentrated his mind upon the Atman His body appeared as immovable as a rock

His mind was completely absorbed in Brahman After a while he returned to normal consciousness Then out of the fullness of his joy he spoke

The ego has disappeared I have realized my identity with Brahman and so all my desires have melted away I have risen above my ignorance and

You too must discriminate and realize the supreme truth of Brahman Realize the true nature of the Atman as the sum of all bliss Shake off the delusions which your own mind has created Thus you will become free and illumined You will make your life blessed

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The ego has disappeared I have realized my identity with Brahman and so all my desires have melted away I have risen above my ignorance and

my knowledge of this seeming universe What is this joy that I feel? Who shall measure it? I know nothing but joy limitless unbounded!

The ocean of Brahman is full of nectar—the joy of the Atman The treasure I have found there cannot be described in words The mind cannot conceive of it My mind fell like a hailstone into that vast expanse of Brahman's ocean Touching one drop of it I melted away and became one with Brahman And now though I return to human consciousness I abide in the joy of the Atman

Where is this universe? Who took it away? Has it merged into something else? A while ago I beheld it—now it exists no longer This is wonderful indeed!

Here is the ocean of Brahman full of endless joy How can I accept or reject anything? Is there anything apart or distinct from Brahman?

Now finally and clearly I know that I am the Atman whose nature is eternal joy I see nothing I hear nothing I know nothing that is separate from me



I BOW down to you O great soul my master! You are free from all attachment the greatest of the wise and the good You are the embodiment of eternal bliss Your compassion is infinite a sea without a shore

Your eyes are full of mercy Their glance is like  
a flood of moonbeams refreshing the weariness of  
my mortality the pain of my bondage to human  
birth and death In one instant by your grace  
I have found this inexhaustible undivided treas-  
ure—the Atman the ever blissful

I am blessed indeed! I have achieved life's only  
purpose The dragon of rebirth can never seize me  
now The Infinite is mine I recognize my true  
nature in eternal joy And all this through your  
mercy!

\* \* \*

NOTHING binds me to this world I no longer  
identify myself with the physical body or the  
mind I am one with the Atman the undying  
I am the Atman—Infinite pure eternal at peace  
forever

I am neither he who acts nor he who experi-  
ences the results of action I am beyond action and  
am changeless My nature is pure consciousness  
I am absolute reality eternal goodness

It is not I who see hear speak act suffer or  
enjoy I am the Atman eternal ever living be-  
yond action unbounded unattached—nothing but  
pure infinite consciousness

I am neither this object nor that I am That  
which makes all objects manifest I am supreme

eternally pure. I am neither inward nor outward. I am the infinite Brahman, one without a second.

I am Reality, without beginning, without equal. I have no part in the illusion of "I" and "You", "this" and "that". I am Brahman, one without a second, bliss without end, the eternal, unchanging Truth.

I am the Lord and refuge of all. I am the destroyer of all sins and impurities. I am pure, indivisible consciousness. I am the witness of all things. I have no other lord but myself. I am free from the sense of "I" and "mine".

I dwell within all beings as the Atman, the pure consciousness, the ground of all phenomena, internal and external. I am both the enjoyer and that which is enjoyed. In the days of my ignorance, I used to think of these as being separate from myself. Now I know that I am All.

In myself is the ocean of joy, infinite, undivided. The wind of Maya plays over it, creating and dissolving the appearances of this world, like waves.

Mistaking the appearance for the reality, people ignorantly imagine that I am enclosed within a bodily and a mental form. In the same way, they imagine Time, which is indivisible and continuous, to be divided into cycles, years and seasons.

But no matter what the imagination of deluded and ignorant fools may superimpose on the,

Reality the Reality remains untainted The mighty river of water in the mirage cannot wet the dry desert

Like the ether I cannot be tainted Like the sun I am other than the objects I reveal Like the mountain I stand immovable Like the ocean I am boundless

The sky is not confined by its clouds I am not confined by the body How therefore can I be affected by the states of waking dreaming or dreamless sleep? They are merely bodily conditions

My outward form comes and goes It acts and tastes the fruits of its actions It withers and it dies But I remain like a great mountain firm and immovable forever

I know neither desire nor the ending of desire— for I am the same always incapable of division How can any action be possible for the one who is eternal universal complete and infinite as the sky? What should he strive for?

I am without organs without form without mind I am untouched by change I am the undivided blissful consciousness How can I become involved in action either righteous or sinful? Therefore the scriptures declare that the Atman remains equally untouched by good and by evil

A man is other than his shadow No matter

what touches his shadow—hot or cold good or bad—he remains completely untouched

The properties of the objects observed do not affect the witness who stands apart from them without attachment In the same manner the properties of a room do not affect the lamp which reveals them

The sun witnesses actions but is distinct from them The fire burns all things but is distinct from them The rope is mistaken for a snake but remains a rope So also I—the unchanging Atman the pure consciousness—am distinct from this seeming form

I neither act nor make others act I neither experience nor make others experience I neither see nor make others see I am the Atman self luminous transcendent

The sun is reflected upon water Water moves and the fool thinks that the sun is moving The Atman is reflected upon the physical and mental bodies The bodies move and act and the fool thinks I act I experience I am killed

This body may drop dead in water or on land I am not affected by that The ether in a jar is not affected when the jar is broken

To act or to enjoy to be dull witted or cunning or intoxicated to be free or in bondage—all these are transient conditions of the intellect They have nothing to do with the Atman which is

Brahman, the absolute, the one without a second  
Let the Maya undergo ten, a hundred, a thousand  
transformations—what do they matter to me, who  
have no part in them? Can a cloud stain the sky?

This whole universe—from Maya down to the  
outward physical forms—is seen as a mere shadow  
of Brahman I am that Brahman, one without a  
second, subtle as ether, without beginning or end

I am that Brahman, one without a second the  
ground of all existences I make all things mani-  
fest I give form to all things I am within all  
things, yet nothing can taint me I am eternal,  
pure, unchangeable, absolute

I am that Brahman one without a second  
Maya, the many-seeming is merged in me I am  
beyond the grasp of thought the essence of all  
things I am the truth I am knowledge I am infi-  
nite I am absolute bliss

I am beyond action the reality which cannot  
change I have neither part nor form I am abso-  
lute I am eternal Nothing sustains me, I stand  
alone I am one without a second

I am the soul of the universe I am all things  
and above all things I am one without a second  
I am pure consciousness single and universal I  
am joy I am life everlasting

Ever and ever again, I salute you, most noble  
lord, my master By the supreme majesty of your

grace I have found this blessed state I am ruler  
of the kingdom of myself

\* \* \*

UNTIL now I have been dreaming In my dream  
I wandered through the forest of illusion from  
birth to birth beset by all kinds of troubles and  
miseries subject to reincarnation decay and death  
The tiger of ego attacked me cruelly without ceas-  
ing Now by your infinite compassion O master  
you have wakened me from my dream You have  
set me free forever

Salutations to you O great master You are  
one with Brahman You are one with the shining  
Light that casts this shadow of a world

\* \* \*

THE worthy disciple has found the joy of the  
Atman in samadhi and awakened forever to con-  
sciousness of Reality Now he prostrates himself  
before his great master The master glad at heart  
speaks to him again in the following memorable  
words

Our perception of the universe is a continuous  
perception of Brahman though the ignorant man  
is not aware of this Indeed this universe is noth-  
ing but Brahman See Brahman everywhere under  
all circumstances with the eye of the spirit and a  
tranquil heart How can the physical eyes see any-

thing but physical objects? How can the mind of the enlightened man think of anything other than the Reality?

How could a wise man reject the experience of supreme bliss and take delight in mere outward forms? When the moon shines in its exceeding beauty who would care to look at a painted moon?

Experience of the unreal offers us no satisfaction nor any escape from misery Find satisfaction therefore in the experience of the sweet bliss of Brahman Devote yourself to the Atman and live happily forever

O noble soul this is how you must pass your days—see the Atman everywhere enjoy the bliss of the Atman fix your thought upon the Atman the one without a second

The Atman is one absolute indivisible It is pure consciousness To imagine many forms within it is like imagining palaces in the air Therefore know that you are the Atman ever blissful one without a second and find the ultimate peace Remain absorbed in the joy which is silence

This state of silence is a state of entire peace in which the intellect ceases to occupy itself with the unreal In this silence the great soul who knows and is one with Brahman enjoys unmixed bliss forever

To the man who has realized the Atman as his

true being and who has tasted the innermost bliss of the Atman there is no more excellent joy than this state of silence in which all cravings are dumb

No matter what he is doing—walking standing sitting or lying down—the illumined seer whose delight is the Atman lives in joy and freedom

When a great soul has found perfect tranquillity by freeing his mind from all distracting thoughts and completely realizing Brahman then he no longer needs sacred places moral disciplines set hours postures directions or objects for his meditation His knowledge of the Atman depends upon no special circumstances or conditions

In order to know that a jar is a jar are any special conditions required? Only that our means of perception the eyes shall be free from defect This alone reveals the object

The Atman is eternally present It is revealed by transcendental experience which is not dependent upon place time or rituals of self purification

I do not require any special condition or proof in order to know that my name is Devadatta Similarly for a knower of Brahman the knowledge that I am Brahman does not require any proof

The Atman shining with its own light causes this apparent universe But how can anything in

this universe reveal the Atman? Apart from the Atman, these appearances are worthless, bodiless, unreal.

The Vedas the Puranas all scriptures and all living creatures only exist because the Atman exists. How then can any of them reveal the Atman, which is the revealer of everything?

\* \* \*

THIS Atman shines with its own light. Its power is infinite. It is beyond sense knowledge. It is the source of all experience. He who knows the Atman is free from every kind of bondage. He is full of glory. He is the greatest of the great.

The things perceived by the senses cause him neither grief nor pleasure. He is not attached to them. Neither does he shun them. Constantly delighting in the Atman he is always at play within himself. He tastes the sweet unending bliss of the Atman and is satisfied.

The child plays with his toys forgetting even hunger and physical pain. In like manner the knower of Brahman takes his delight in the Atman forgetting all thought of 'I' and "mine".

He gets his food easily by begging alms without anxiety or care. He drinks from the clear stream. He lives unfettered and independent. He sleeps without fear in the forest or on the cremation ground. He does not need to wash or dry his

clothes for he wears none The earth is his bed  
He walks the highway of Vedanta His playmate  
is Brahman, the everlasting

The knower of the Atman does not identify  
himself with his body He rests within it as if  
within a carriage If people provide him with com-  
forts and luxuries, he enjoys them and plays with  
them like a child He bears no outward mark of a  
holy man He remains quite unattached to the  
things of this world

He may wear costly clothing or none He may  
be dressed in deer or tiger skin or clothed in pure  
knowledge He may seem like a madman or like  
a child, or sometimes like an unclean spirit Thus  
he wanders the earth

The man of contemplation walks alone He  
lives desireless amidst the objects of desire The  
Atman is his eternal satisfaction He sees the At-  
man present in all things

Sometimes he appears to be a fool sometimes a  
wise man Sometimes he seems splendid as a king,  
sometimes feeble minded Sometimes he is calm  
and silent Sometimes he draws men to him as a  
python attracts its prey Sometimes people honor  
him greatly, sometimes they insult him Some-  
times they ignore him That is how the illumined  
soul lives always absorbed in the highest bliss

He has no riches yet he is always contented  
He is helpless, yet of mighty power. He enjoys

nothing, yet he is continually rejoicing He has no equal, yet he sees all men as his equals

He acts, yet is not bound by his action He reaps the fruit of past actions, yet is unaffected by them He has a body, but does not identify himself with it He appears to be an individual, yet he is present in all things, everywhere

The knower of Brahman who lives in freedom from body-consciousness, is never touched by pleasure or pain, good or evil

If a man identifies himself with the gross and subtle coverings within which he dwells he will experience pleasure and pain, good or evil But nothing is either good or evil to the contemplative sage, because he has realized the Atman and his bonds have fallen from him

During an eclipse the shadow of the earth falls upon the sun The ignorant who do not understand what has happened say that the sun has been swallowed up by the darkness of the eclipse —but the sun can never be swallowed up

In the same manner, the ignorant see the body of a knower of Brahman and identify him with it Actually, he is free from the body and every other kind of bondage To him the body is merely a shadow

He dwells in the body, but regards it as a thing apart from himself—like the cast-off skin of a

snake The body moves hither and thither impelled by the vital force

A log of wood is carried by the river to lower or to higher ground His body, carried by the river of time, enjoys or suffers the effects of past actions

In past lives while he still dwelt in ignorance he created certain karmas In this present life, he apparently enjoys or suffers their effects But now he has reached illumination and no longer identifies himself with the body His body moves among external objects and he seems to enjoy or suffer the effects of past deeds—just like a man who is still ignorant Really however he is established in Brahman and merely inhabits the body as a calm detached onlooker His mind is clear of all distraction, and unmoved like the pivot of a wheel

He neither directs his senses toward external objects nor does he withdraw them He stands like an onlooker unconcerned He does not desire the reward of his actions for he is intoxicated by the Atman—that nectar of pure joy

He who renounces the pursuit of any aim either in this world or even in heaven itself and remains absorbed in the Atman is indeed the Lord Shiva Himself He is the excellent knower of Brahman

Even though he dwells in the body he is eternally free He has reached the blessed goal He is

the excellent knower of Brahman When the body falls from him he becomes merged in Brahman He attains Brahman the one without a second

An actor remains the same person even when dressed to play a part The excellent knower of Brahman always remains Brahman and nothing else

When an illumined soul has attained oneness with Brahman his body may wither and fall anywhere like the shrivelled leaf of a tree What does it matter? For he has already freed himself from body consciousness burning it away in the fire of knowledge

The illumined soul lives eternally conscious of his oneness with Brahman He tastes continually the joy of the Atman the one without a second In putting off this garment of skin flesh and bone he does not have to consider if the place the time or the circumstances are suitable

\* \* \*

TO BE rid of the body is not liberation Nor is a man set free by external forms of renunciation Liberation is the cutting of the knot of ignorance in the heart

Does a tree gain or lose anything because its leaf falls in a ditch and not in a river or in sacred ground rather than in an open field?

The destruction of the body the sense organs

the life breath and the brain is like the destruction of a leaf a flower or a fruit But the Atman like the tree still stands The Atman is not affected—it is the real Self the true Being the embodiment of joy

The scriptures define the Atman as pure consciousness —thereby showing that it is the eternal truth Only the outer coverings die They are made of ignorance concealing the Atman

In truth say the scriptures the Atman is immortal —thereby showing that it stands indestructible among the things that change and perish

Stones trees grass grain straw cloth and all other substances when burnt are reduced to ashes The body the senses the vital forces the mind and all other physical manifestations when burnt by the fire of knowledge become Brahman

Darkness is merged in sunlight its opposite So also this apparent world is merged in Brahman

When the jar is broken the ether within it becomes one with the surrounding ether When the coverings are destroyed the knower of Brahman becomes Brahman

When milk is poured into milk oil into oil water into water they blend in absolute oneness So also the illumined seer the knower of the Atman becomes one with the Atman



HE WHO has become liberated in this life gains liberation in death and is eternally united with Brahman, the Absolute Reality. Such a seer will never be reborn.

He knows that he is one with Brahman, and has burnt the coverings of ignorance in the fire of this knowledge. Thus he has become Brahman. How can Brahman be subject to birth?

Similarly, both bondage and liberation are the fictions of our ignorance. They do not really exist in the Atman. Just as a piece of rope remains rope, whether or not we mistake it for a snake. The imagined snake does not really exist in the rope.

People speak of bondage and liberation—meaning the presence or absence of the covering veil of ignorance. But, in reality, Brahman has no covering. For there is none other than Brahman—the one without a second. If there were a covering, Brahman would not be unique. The scriptures admit no duality.

Bondage and liberation exist in the mind only, but the ignorant attribute them falsely to the Atman itself—just as they say the sun is darkened when it is merely covered by a cloud. But Brahman, the one without a second, the unchangeable reality, remains unattached. It is pure consciousness.

To imagine that the Atman can be bound or liberated is false. Both bondage and liberation are

states of mind Neither of them can be attributed to Brahman, the eternal reality

Therefore both bondage and liberation are fictions of ignorance They are not in the Atman The Atman is infinite, without parts, beyond action It is serene, stainless, pure How can one imagine duality in Brahman, which is entire like the ether, without a second, the supreme reality?

There is neither birth nor death, neither bound nor aspiring soul, neither liberated soul nor seeker after liberation—this is the ultimate and absolute truth

\* \* \*

TODAY I have revealed to you the supreme mystery This is the inmost essence of all Vedanta, the crest-jewel of all the scriptures I regard you as my own son—a true seeker after liberation You are purged of all the taints of this dark age, and your mind is clear of desire

\* \* \*

HEARING these words of his master, the disciple prostrated himself before him with a reverent heart Then, with his master's blessing, he went his way, set free from the bondage of ignorance.

The master also went his way, bringing purity to the whole world, his mind immersed in the ocean of absolute existence and joy.

\* \* \*

IN THIS dialogue between master and disciple the true nature of the Atman has been set forth in a manner which seekers after liberation may easily understand

May those spiritual aspirants who seek liberation who have cleansed themselves of all the heart's impurities by the performance of selfless work who are averse to worldly pleasures who delight in the words of the scriptures whose minds have entered peace—may they hospitably welcome this salutary teaching'

And to those who ignorantly wander the desert of this world treading the circle of death and rebirth weary thirsty and oppressed by hot misery as if by the sun's fierce rays—may this teaching reveal Brahman the one without a second the giver of delight the ocean of nectar which is spread before our very feet May this teaching of Shankara bring success to their efforts and lead them to liberation

Om              Peace—Peace—Peace